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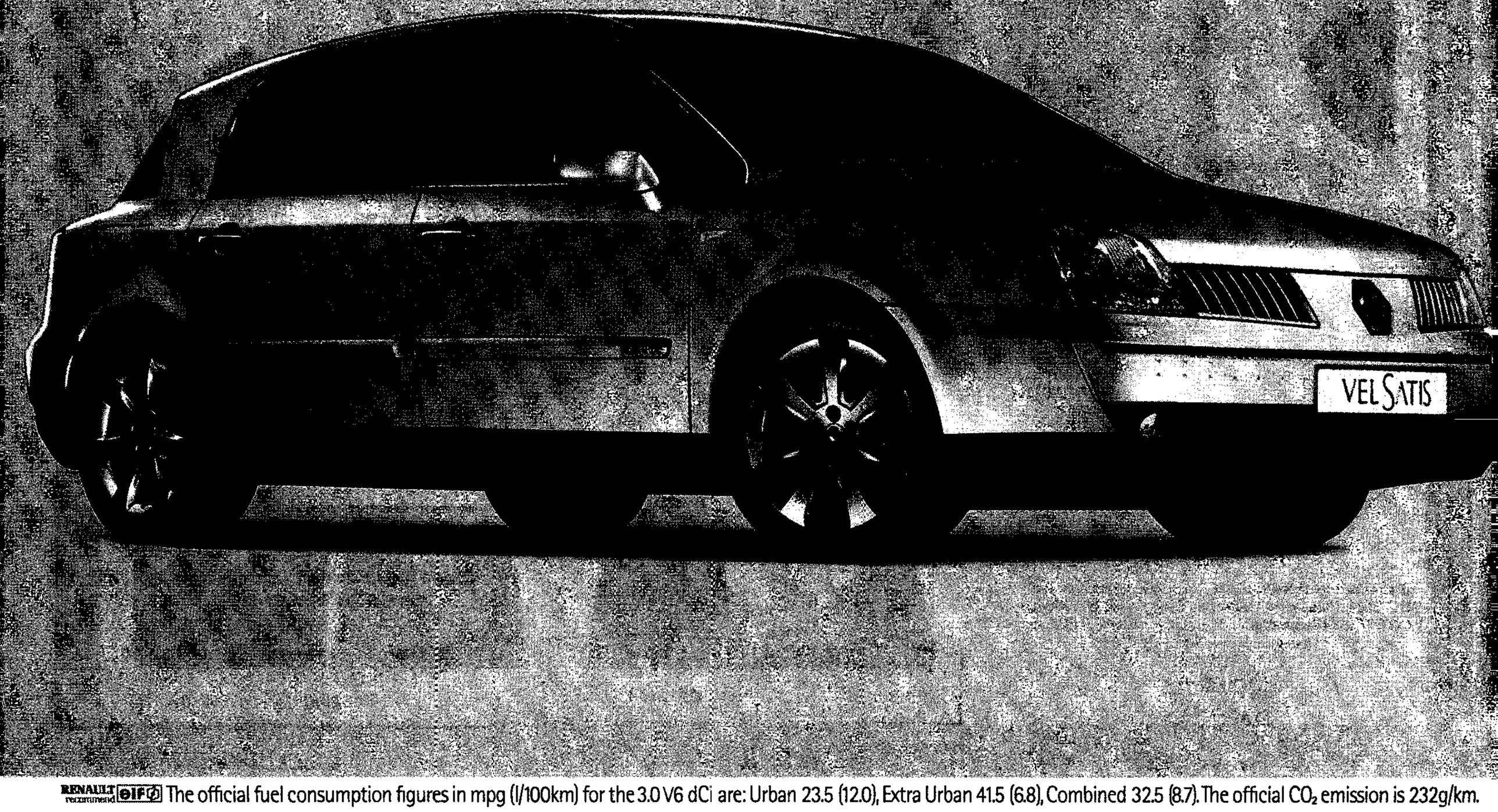

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Gnome

SINCE the tragic events of 9/11 it has become increasingly clear that there is an appetite for more serious and responsible journalism in Britain's newspapers.

That is why from today the *Gnome* will once again revert to its original title of the *Daily Gnome* and will drop the "red top", so long the symbol of tabloid excess so rightly deplored by all thinking people.

There will be no more of the celebrity trivia, tittle-tattle or smut that has done so much to discredit the British Press in recent years. Instead the *Daily Gnome* will devote itself to hard news and the serious issues of the day.

E. Strobes, pp Lord Gnome
Moron House.

INSIDE THE *DAILY GNOME* TODAY:

- **DAVID BECKHAM** naked. **1,2,3,4**
- **POSH** in a thong! **5,6,7,8**
- **THE BATTLE OF THE BUMS** Kylie v. J-Lo – now you decide! **9,10,11,12,13**
- **TOODLE-LOO!** Our gossip team, The Midnight Slappers, spot celebrities on the toilet *(That's enough hard news and serious issues. Ed.)*

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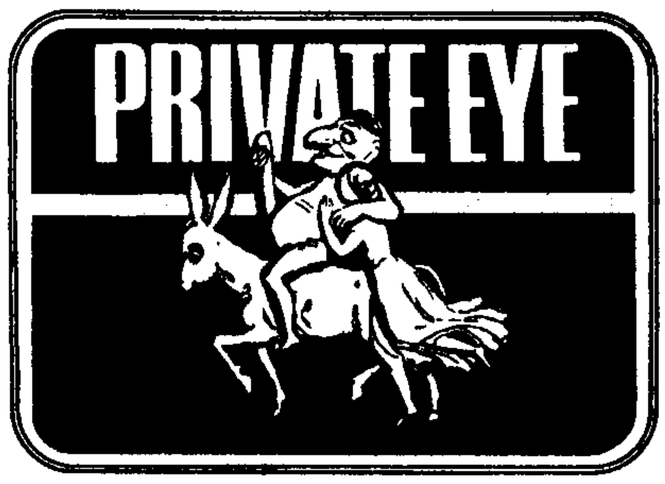


Blowing the whistle

- ***Sven, Ulrika and the Street of Shame 4***
- ***The Libyan, the Hack, the Lawyers and the Tarts: libel at the Sunday Telegraph 5***
- ***Blair and Black Rod; Flunkey at Buckingham Palace; a Brussels foot-in-mouth inquiry 6,7***
- ***Fulham's pyramid of debt; Equitable goes to court; plus Jim Slater's return: In the City 28,29***

INTERNATIONAL development secretary Clare Short's suggestion that BAE Systems' £28m sale of a military air traffic system to Tanzania might be corrupt has put her even more at odds with her cabinet colleagues.

Just one measure of the esteem in which Tony Blair's government holds Labour party donor BAE Systems is the latest new year's honours list. The company's government affairs director Peter McLoughlin and regional marketing director Brian Tucker were both presented with OBEs – a timely reward for their firm's success in striking the Tanzanian deal.

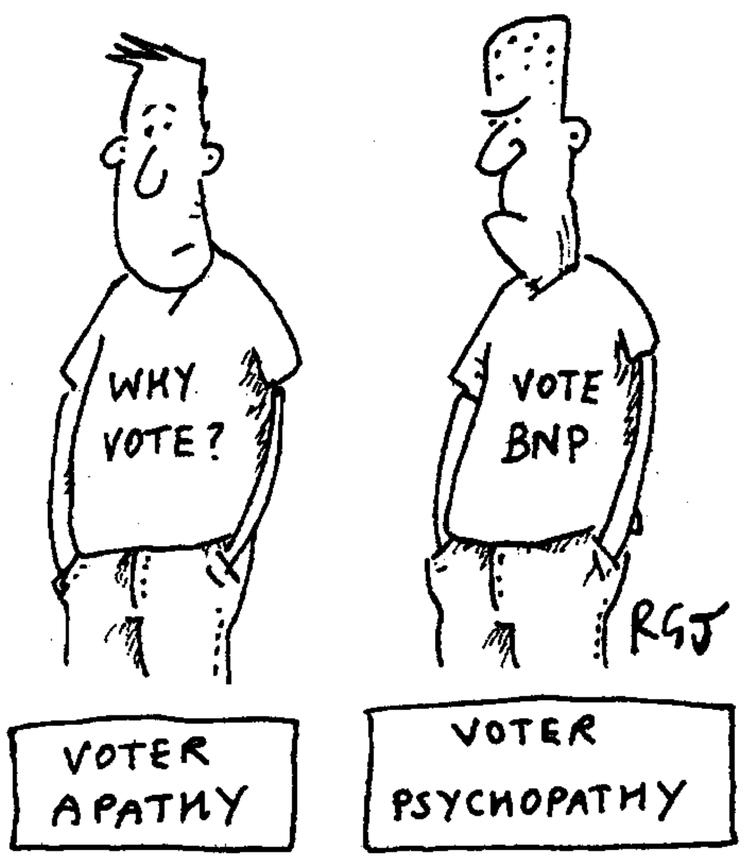
WHAT lessons can Britain draw from the plight of EMI? It has announced 1,800 job cuts and halved its dividend; and its accounts include some very embarrassing figures – like the £19m "exceptional charge" paid to Mariah Carey to make her go away after her album flopped.

It's all a bit of a mess; and EMI's response to the crisis is less than impressive: it is simply chucking lots of lower-ranking artists off its roster. So the lesson is that chancellor Gordon Brown should perhaps have thought twice before appointing EMI executive Kathleen O'Donovan to the court of the Bank of England to help him run Britain's economy.

MO MOWLAM's decision to sell her story to the *Mail* confirms her willingness to forgive her enemies more readily than her "friends" such as T. Blair and P. Mandelson.

Back in 1997, when Mo was putting on weight and losing hair because of treatment for a brain tumour, the *Mail* columnist Lynda Lee-Potter memorably and viciously claimed she bore "an undeniable resemblance to an only slightly effeminate Geordie trucker".

When the nature of Mowlam's illness was revealed soon afterwards, the *Mail* was reviled in Labour circles. Happily, there was no mention of this unpleasantness in Mo's lengthy *Mail* interview to promote the serialisation – an interview conducted by, er, Lynda Lee-Potter.



JUBILEE SPECIAL

There will be a free eight-page pull-out supplement in the next issue to celebrate more than 50 years of respect and loyalty from Lord Gnome.

THE QUEEN has been surprisingly happy to let the palace spinners continue cultivating the image of Camilla Parker Bowles. The only high-level dissension came over the decision to use the Queen Mother's lying-in-state and funeral as a backdrop for part of this project, especially given the old queen's dislike of Camilla.

Public opinion is now being carefully monitored with a view to working out how to use the golden jubilee weekend to further promote Camilla. Getting her on to the palace balcony after the jubilee service is the ultimate aim.

HOW THE LAW WORKS

FOLLOWING a year-long investigation, city law firm Herbert Smith, which is acting for Equitable Life, has told the company it does not have a case against its former legal advisers, Denton Wilde Sapte.

Lawyers at Denton Wilde Sapte meanwhile have been commissioned by the liquidators of Independent Insurance to investigate that company's former legal advisers, er, Herbert Smith.

"Who's been losing me my child benefit?"

SO gloomy is the forecast for Labour's performance in the local elections the BBC has been asked by a Millbank stooge not to devote any special coverage to the pending catastrophe.

Eager to please as ever, Ceefax, like the other (unwatched) digital text services, will not put out any special sections or even track the results.

Hopes that the BBC will relent and fulfil its public service remit rest with a few gallant protesters in news who are trying to save the day.

MMR: THE STORY SO FAR

Don't miss Private Eye's special report on the mumps, measles and rubella vaccine controversy

On sale at newsagents priced £1.50...
Or order your copy by phone:
See page 35 for details

Street of Shame

THE brief affair between Ulrika and Sven certainly provoked a svensation in the street of shame.

Alastair Campbell seemed to veer between pride and embarrassment at having introduced the bonking Swedes to each other at porn king Richard Desmond's 50th birthday party. What no one asked, however, was why a close adviser to the squeaky clean Vicar of St Albion felt obliged to turn out to toast the publisher of *Spunk Loving Sluts* and other such salubrious organs. Could Ally be considering a return to his former career as sex columnist for *Forum* should the Blair bandwagon come off the rails?

And what of Dirty Des himself? The owner of the *Express* and *Star* could hardly be amused by his organs' total failure to get a sniff of such a classic tabloid shaggerama, despite it starting at his very own birthday bash with editors and senior hacks all over the place. Even more gallingly, after the scandal broke in the *Mirror*, Dirty Des's pisspoor celebrity columnist Vanessa Feltz was regaling *Sunday Express* readers with an account of how she saw it all blossom on the night: "I was sitting next to Ulrika... She spent the entire evening looking longingly at the venerable Sven... Even the presence of his beady-eyed girlfriend, Nancy Del'Ollio, didn't deter Ulrika... She looked enraptured."

Eh? So why the hell didn't Feltz bother to report it at the time – or, at the very least, tip off Des's tabloid troops so they could break the story rather than being caught with their pants down like the women in Des's *Readers' Wives*?

The fury at the *Express* was matched only by the rage of *News of the Screws* editrix Rebekah Wade, who had been staking out Ulrika for several days and planned to devote the first eight pages to the affair – only to find herself scooped by the *Daily Mirror*. Internal investigations failed to establish whether the *Mirror* was tipped off by a disgruntled *Screws* hack, or whether the story was leaked by Ulrika's publicity agent Melanie Cantor in return for more "sympathetic" coverage than she could expect from Rebekah's mob.

The *Mirror*'s "exclusive" was credited to the 3am Girls, even though it was actually showbiz hack James Scott who received the tip-off. Such is Piers Moron's obsession with boosting the 3am Girls' profile that they got the glory for a story that had nothing to do with them. Meanwhile, Moron's rebranded *Daily Mirror* quickly abandoned its much-ballyhooed "new seriousness" only a few days after the relaunch to devote acres of space to the bonkerama. And Moron's willingness to play along with Ulrika and Melanie Cantor made a mockery of his boasts that the *Mirror* was no longer willing to be manipulated by tinpot celebrities and their publicists. Shurely shome mishtake, Piers?

"You men are all the same – all you ever think about is Becks!"

THE 16-year-old twins acquitted of murdering Damilola Taylor were denounced on the front page of the *Sun* as "the new Krays" – leaders of a gang of violent thugs "who rule South London estates through fear, intimidation, robbery and protection rackets". All the other tabloids had similarly lengthy and detailed accounts of the boys' viciousness.

Well, all except one. The *Mirror* carried a remarkably sympathetic piece, based on an "exclusive interview" with the boys and their mother by crime reporter Graham Brough, which presented them as mere "tearaways" who wouldn't hurt anyone. An accompanying article by Brough claimed that Boy B, who fathered a child last year, was also a "perfect dad".

The teenagers' mother must have been delighted. But she probably expected no less, since in recent months she and *Mirror*man Brough have become good friends – which is how the *Mirror* gained its "exclusive" access.

WHEN the body of an unidentified female was found in the Thames near the home of missing schoolgirl Amanda Dowler, the British press wasted no time in circumspection.

Instead the newspapers immediately jumped to a unanimous conclusion. "Milly body is found in river," announced the *Telegraph*. "Body found in hunt for schoolgirl," said the *Guardian*. "Nightmare for Milly's family after body is found in river," reported the *Express*. "Milly: body found in Thames," stated the *Mirror*. "Yet more torment for Milly's parents; Body in Thames," declared the *Evening Standard*. When it was revealed that the body was not that of the missing girl after all, only the *Standard* was able to alter its later editions to read: "Body in Thames: Torment as family is told body is not Milly." Other newspapers had to wait until the next day to report that the body in the river was in fact that of a missing 73-year-old woman.

RIC PORTER, the amiable chap who has the wretched task of producing Dirty Des's top-shelf magazines at Northern & Shell, rings the *Eye* to complain that a story in our last issue was "completely untrue".

How completely? Well, says Porter, we claimed that his girlfriend, blonde nude model Vicki Holloway, is chief sub-editor for the porn mags. In fact she is merely *a* sub-editor, not the chief one.

Anything else? "There is no magazine called *Spunk Loving Sluts*." Consequently, he says, there cannot have been any objections to it from wholesalers, as we suggested might be the case.

When we next speak to Porter, only a few minutes later, he seems to have forgotten this particular denial. "The distributors haven't been caused consternation by our title *Spunk Loving Sluts*. The title came out. The distributors were quite happy with it. And Richard Desmond's happy with what we're doing. Everything's rosy in the garden of Northern & Shell."

Warming to his theme, Porter then denies that Desmond has ever called him a "stupid fucking cunt". When we point out that this is Dirty Des's standard form of address to all his employees, however, he does not demur.

HACKS at the *Independent* are increasingly alarmed by the friendship between editor Simon "Pussy" Kelner and Peter Mandelson, who now sits on the "international advisory board" of the paper's parent company, Independent News and Media. They fear that Mandy's growing influence on the *Indie* may leave them marooned on the same melting iceberg as "new" Labour.

Mandelson is a leading figure in the European Movement; sure enough, the dominant gimmick of the paper's recent low-cost relaunch turned out to be a passionate commitment to the Euro. Similarly, on budget day the *Indie* splashed on David Blunkett's attack on "money god" Gordon Brown, a piece attributed to unnamed aides of the home secretary by political editor Andrew Grice, a favourite Mandy mouthpiece. Mandelson, it should be noted, is supporting Blunkett to succeed Blair, knowing he has no hope of preferment under Brown.

On the same day the *Indie* reported on the "financial shambles" at the dome uncovered by the national audit office (NAO) – without mentioning the original dome supremo, one P. Mandelson. But a third story that day did quote Mandy, apparently without irony, calling for the creation of an "ethics commissioner".

Mandelson is among old friends at the *Indie*. Apart from Kelner and Grice, there are Mandy's friendly biographer Donald Macintyre, and David Aaronovitch, who met Mandy in their youthful Communist days and stayed close after both worked for John Birt on *Weekend World*. Columnist Yasmin Alibhai-Brown is yet another Mandy mate from their membership of the British American Project in the 1980s. How long before the paper drops its absurd new slogan "The Broader View" and settles instead for the title already doing the rounds at Marsh Wall – the *Mandypendent*?

"Pursue Adrian Noble out of the building"

AFTER years of living in the shadow of his more famous wife Tina Brown, Dame Harold Evans has decided to remind the world that he too was once a media colossus: he is writing his memoirs. Hence the touching appeal from the Dame which appears in *Castellum*, the newsletter for alumni of University College Durham:

"It occurs to me that there may be some members of the Durham Castle Society who have published their own accounts of Durham or who may have marvellously defamatory memories of my own time there. If so, I would love to hear at this email in the US: hevans@usnews.com.

"I haven't written anything yet, but I imagine I will be writing about such grave matters as the day Freddy Mobbs's trousers were hoisted on the flagpole, to the fury of the judge in his bedchamber at the end of the Norman Gallery; and my campaign to have table tennis – ping pong! – recognised for Colours. And the editorial I wrote for *Palatinate* over the banning of our ice hockey team visiting Communist East Berlin, an editorial I thought was a masterly indictment of craven bureaucracy but which, re-read a generation later, is just a whimper of callow youth."

All most endearing. But anyone tempted to answer the appeal should be warned: as the *Eye* and many other publications have learned over the years, any stories about Dame Harry Evans which really are "marvellously defamatory" usually send him running to his libel lawyers forthwith.

WE REPORT TODAY on the astonishing rise in the number of children in London who receive home tutoring to help them get into the sedondary school of their choice and to pass examinations. ***Evening Standard***

THE LIBYAN, THE HACK, THE LAWYERS AND THE TARTS

COLONEL Gaddafi's 30-year-old son was jubilant at the settlement of his libel action against the *Sunday Telegraph* two weeks ago, only three days into the trial. "I came to clear my name," the shaven-headed Saif "Dubya" Gaddafi announced on the steps of the high court. "I'm going to call my father, and I think he will be happy."

Sunday Telegraph hack Con Coughlin and his editor Dominic Lawson were equally happy – not least because both were due to face an uncomfortable few days in the witness box being quizzed about the source of Coughlin's article, published in 1995, which falsely alleged that Gaddafi junior was involved in a money-laundering scam in Cairo as part of a plot to flood Iran with vast quantities of counterfeit currency.

The story had in fact come from MI6, which briefed the paper with the approval of then foreign secretary Malcolm Rifkind. When Gaddafi sued, however, the spooks from Vauxhall Cross suddenly came over all uncooperative and declined to provide the necessary evidence – leaving the *Sunday Telegraph* in the tricky position of trying to defend a report for which it had no proof.

As the trial date loomed, with Gaddafi's lawyers still refusing to settle, the *Telegraph* decided to try a bit of freelance diplomacy. Over lunch with Dominic Lawson, Tony Blair's chief foreign policy adviser at No 10, Sir David Manning, suggested an approach to the Saudi ambassador in Washington, Prince Bandar, who had previously acted as a middleman in negotiations between Britain and Libya over the Lockerbie suspects. Bandar flew to London two days before the trial and, eventually, persuaded Saif to settle.

One of the more curious sights on the final day at the high court was the arrival of *Grauniad* hack David Leigh with the Libyan entourage. Two years ago Leigh wrote a lengthy piece headed "Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Journalist" revealing that MI6 "had been supplying Coughlin with material for years"; at the same time he agreed to give evidence for the Libyan heir. This provoked a furious letter from Lawson to *Guardian* editor Alan Rusbridger, complaining that fellow-hacks ought to stick together rather than assisting the son of a foreign despot. Leigh then agreed not to testify, but clearly remains on good terms with the Tripoli team.

Last week *Grauniad* hackette Emma Brockes was granted an exclusive interview with Gaddafi junior; a news report in her paper also claimed that the *Sunday Telegraph* had been forced into a "humiliating retreat".

In fact, the terms of the deal were much the same as those offered by the *Sunday Telegraph* throughout the last six years: a clear but not particularly grovelling apology, accepting that the story was untrue; no damages; and a contribution to Gaddafi's costs.

Not all that big a contribution, however. Gaddafi's lawyers, Eversheds, had run up a bill of almost £1.5m by the time the action was concluded, of which the newspaper will pay only £150,000. As a foreign litigant, Saif had also been obliged to put up a security of £400,000 before the trial started. No doubt Gaddafi (or his dad) will pay up promptly when the bill for the remaining £950,000 is sent to Tripoli, so quite why solicitor Norman Chapman of Eversheds looked so gloomy at the end of the case is a mystery.

Certainly the *Sunday Telegraph* was glad to get out before Lawson and Coughlin entered the witness box. But Saif himself may have been equally relieved. He had endured only one day of an expected four-day cross-examination by the time the case came to an abrupt end, but defence counsel Geoffrey Robertson QC had already begun to score some points. Saif admitted that he was a friend and associate of the Austrian far-right politician Jorg Haider, and became angry when Robertson described Colonel Gaddafi as a dictator. ("It is the wrong name. I don't accept naming the leader as a dictator.") He also gave conflicting accounts of his whereabouts in the summer of 1995, when the *Telegraph* alleged that he was in Geneva arranging banking transactions. Having first said that he hadn't been in Switzerland, he was confronted with medical records showing that he had been admitted to hospital in Geneva that September.

Had the trial continued, Saif might have faced some particularly embarrassing disclosures about a trip to Australia two months ago, shortly before he headed to London for the libel action. While he was visiting the Great Barrier Reef with a 20-strong posse of chums and security guards, four local prostitutes were recruited for a three-hour "sex party" (fee: $3,000) aboard a chartered boat. When a woman objected to some of the Libyans' sexual demands, a Gaddafi henchman pulled out a gun.

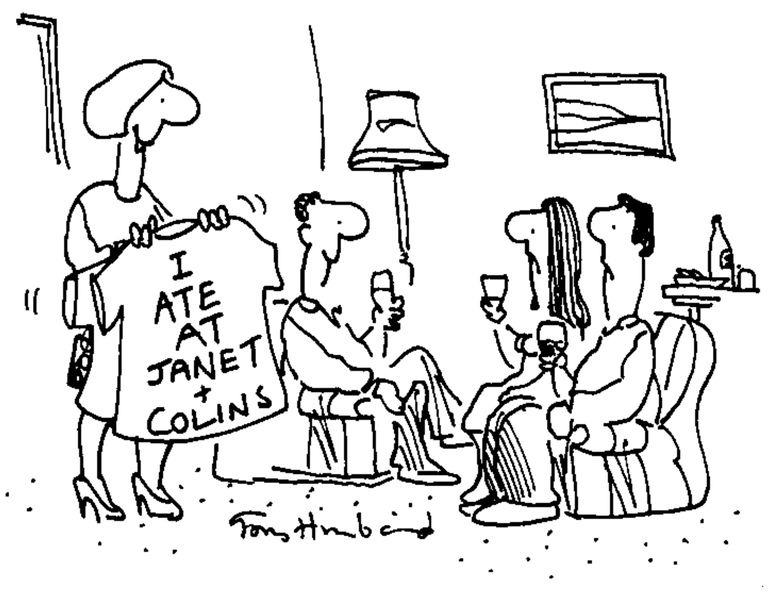
The Libyans phoned again the following night, this time asking for eight prostitutes, but there were no takers. As one of the women told the local *Courier-Mail*, "there was no way I wanted to see those guys again and the word was out that it was a weird scene up there so no one went." By the time the trial started the *Sunday Telegraph*'s lawyers were in touch with the boss of a local escort agency, the deliciously named Crystal Waters, and had high hopes she would come to London to give evidence.

If Gaddafi is really so concerned about his good reputation, perhaps he should be more careful in his choice of aides. Emma Brockes of the *Guardian* reported what happened when she arrived at his London hotel for her interview last week, accompanied by a female colleague: "Two paces inside the door and we are stopped by a man who asks if we are the girls he has sent for from the agency. After a moment's confusion, it becomes clear that he has mistaken us for escorts."

Back home in Tripoli, Saif keeps two pet tigers. When he was studying at an Austrian university five years ago he had them brought over to Vienna zoo for the duration. Now he says he has enjoyed his first visit to Britain so much he wants to do a doctorate in politics at the London School of Economics. It remains to be seen whether the tigers – and his charming bodyguards – will come too.

PS: Associates of Mohamed Fayed were keen last week to stress the *Sunday Telegraph*'s "humiliation" by Saif Gaddafi. The fondness of Fayed and his lackeys for Libya's first family is not new. Two years ago Fayed's Harrods Petroleum won lucrative oil concessions from Colonel Gaddafi, plus a contract to rebuild Libyan "infrastructure", after a very friendly dinner in Tripoli. "He is a great guy believing in God," Fayed raved in the *Spectator* at the time. "I never expected to see a leader so committed to his people. You see the pleasure of the people. They have no poverty… Everyone has a beautiful house. And this is leadership, you know."

Fayed omitted to mention one further example of Libyan generosity, however: Gaddafi helped finance two IRA bomb attacks, in 1983 and 1993, on a certain Knightsbridge department store – the first of which killed six passers-by. Clearly a very great guy indeed.



"We've a little memento for you both"

CLICHEWATCH

Nessun Dorma

HOW could one make sense of Jean-Marie Le Pen's wholly unexpected success in the first round of the French presidential election? Fortunately, top experts and pontificators were on hand to explain…

"Just when everyone thought French politics had gone to sleep comes a dramatic wake-up call, not only for France but for Europe."

— *Scotsman* editorial.

"Gurbux Singh, the chairman of the Commission for Racial Equality… described the French election as 'a salutary wake-up call for Britain's political leaders'." — *Times*.

"Gerry Gable of anti-racist magazine *Searchlight* said: 'It's a wake-up call for people who wish to preserve democracy.'"

— *Daily Express*.

"The victory of racist demagogue Jean-Marie Le Pen… should act as a wake-up call to people in this country."

— *Morning Star* editorial.

"Tory leader Iain Duncan Smith said it was 'a very worrying development indeed... a wake-up call to Western Europe'."

— *Daily Mirror*.

"It was not, for once, hyperbole for the Foreign Office minister Denis MacShane to call Sunday's result 'a wake-up call for the European left'."

— Donald Macintyre, *Independent*

"The wake-up call for the French left is an alarm bell that rings round the continent and its archipelago."

— Hugo Young, *Guardian*.

"Charles Kennedy, the Liberal Democrat leader, said the French result was 'a wake-up call to all of us'."

— *Times*

"It is a wake-up call to the European Union."

— Iain Macwhirter, *Glasgow Herald*.

"The president of the European Parliament, Pat Cox, called Mr Le Pen's breakthrough 'a wake-up call to the French democratic process'."

— *Independent*.

"What has happened in France is a 'wake-up call'."

— *Liverpool Daily Post* editorial.

"The possibility that the BNP may pick up as many as five council seats next week should be a wake-up call."

— *Guardian* editorial.

"The Bishop of Bradford, where race riots broke out last summer, said the French vote should act as a wake-up call to Britain."

— *Daily Mail*.

All most exhausting. In the past month alone, the British press has produced no fewer than 277 "wake-up calls" – for professional footballers, golfers, health workers, farmers and countless others. Is it any wonder that, as the *Independent* reported two weeks ago, "sleeplessness has become the great obsession of our times"?

COURT CIRCULAR

TONY BLAIR may come to regret complaining to the PCC about the *Spectator* article claiming his office had tried to alter the arrangements for the lying-in-state of the Queen Mother.

The assertion, made by political editor Peter Oborne, was picked-up (and embellished) by the *Evening Standard* and *Mail on Sunday,* who have also been subject to Blair's wrath. Oborne claimed the Prime Minister's office tried to get their man at the head of the queue to greet the Queen when she arrived at Westminster Hall to receive her mother's coffin. Simple, relatively uncontroversial – and true.

Detailed plans for the QM's funeral date from a time when spinners played cricket and prime ministers didn't have images to be pampered. There never has been a constitutional role for the British prime minister on state occasions. But having shone at Princess Di's funeral, Tony and his circle assumed he would be the royals' first choice to star at the old queen's send-off. Downing Street, unusually, didn't know what to do, so contacted the palace, which referred them to Lt-Col Sir Malcolm Ross, comptroller of the lord chamberlain's office and mastermind of royal ceremonial. He ruled that Blair had no role in the procession (which was a family matter) nor the funeral ceremony (which the QM had planned in minute detail).

Blair accepted this with good grace – but his spinners weren't so laid back. Representations were made to Black Rod, Sir Michael Willcocks, to the effect that Brenda's first minister ought to receive her at Westminster. Consultations were held between Willcocks, Speaker Michael Martin and the Marquess of Cholmondeley, the lord great chamberlain. In the end they ruled that Blair was leader of a political party and that the neutral figure of Cholmondeley, who normally greets the Queen at Westminster, plus the speaker and the lord chancellor, representing both houses, should greet the Queen, as laid down in the long-standing guidance notes for the funeral. In the end Tony sat mutely with the other politicians like a good boy.

Referring the offending pieces to the PCC the day before he led parliamentary tributes to the Queen for her golden jubilee was an attempt to deprive his critics of ammunition, but the prime minister's special talent for making himself look a prat looks like winning the day in the end.

'Flunkey'

IN KEEPING with Tony Blair's "open government" policy (*shurely shome mishtake? Ed.*), the Inland Revenue published reams of stuff about the budget on its website.

Alas, it was rather too "open". Through some oversight, it included earlier versions of the budget press releases, complete with editing marks showing deletions and revisions. Diligent browsers could thus discover that, for instance, the suspiciously Old Labour phrase "ensure the nation receives a fair share of the profits from the exploitation of the North Sea" was edited out by a treasury official at the last minute, and replaced with this mandarinesque formulation: "the North Sea fiscal regime does not strike the right balance between promoting investment and taking an adequate share of revenue derived from a national resource."

Well done, Sir Humphrey!

OLD Labour hands were shocked when former Robert Maxwell confidant Bernard Donoughue, a former insider in Harold Wilson's kitchen cabinet, was elevated to the government benches in the Lords by Tony Blair.

But they will be delighted to learn that despite his Lordship's best efforts, he still can't find a publisher for his astonishingly tedious memoirs.

ROMFORD Tory boy Andrew Rossindell is still blushing after a heroic publicity stunt in Gibraltar went horribly wrong.

As a guest of the marines, Rossindell had hoped that the Rock's inhabitants, still bridling at government attempts to offload them on to Spain, would welcome their planned exercise landing in Gibraltar. Sadly, instead of yomping into the colony, the marines, with Rossindell on tow, made their landing in, er, Spain.

Ludicrous Rossindell has since been parading the streets of Romford with his pet, a bulldog called Spike that wears a Union Jack doggy coat. Sadly for the MP, and Spike, St George's Day was one public outing too many for the animal. The over-heated dog simply expired.

THE latest step in the privatisation of the post office is Consignia's decision to hand occupational health for its posties to the private firm SchlumbergerSema.

The £70m, five-year contract will transfer the post office's 240 doctors and nurses to the company. But hopefully the posties will do better by them than applicants for disability benefit.

Labour privatised benefits testing at the department of social security (DSS), also handing it to SchlumbergerSema. But the dreadful treatment of claimants under the contract led the social security select committee to wonder whether "standards are coming second to profitability".

SchlumbergerSema is a "£5,000 or more" sponsor of the Labour party, and also now runs the party's membership services – to a multitude of complaints from members. The firm used to be simply called "Sema" until it went bust following an insider-dealing share scandal and it was taken over by the American oil services giant Schlumberger.

"Farc!!!"

TENTATIVE moves towards peace in Sri Lanka, where the ceasefire called by Tamil Tiger leader Velupillai Prabhakaran has held for four months, are good news for everyone. Everyone except British arms manufacturers, that is.

The separatist war has cost thousands of lives on both sides and, as our own government has noted, it's been accompanied by "serious human rights abuses committed by the security forces. These include extra-judicial executions… disappearances, torture and mass arrests and detentions".

Nevertheless our own dear foreign office has licensed a growing number of arms sales to Sri Lanka's ever hungry military. Licensed arms exports grew from £1.5m two years ago to £8m last year, including humanitarian items like parts for armoured fighting vehicles, armoured personnel carriers, general purpose guns, heavy guns, small arms ammo, CS grenades, night vision goggles and laser sights. Any dangerous outbreak of peace could spoil this growing market.

WHILE Tony Blair says he wants to be judged on his improvement of the NHS, health secretary Alan Milburn is pressing on with plans to abolish community health councils (CHCs), the local health watchdogs that would have been well placed to judge him.

The government doesn't like CHCs because they dare to oppose its private finance schemes and monitor waiting times at A&E departments. It wants to replace them with a baroque system of "consultation" much friendlier to hospital management: Patient Advocacy & Liaison Services (PALS). The claim that this has nothing to do with "spin" was shattered last month in the House of Lords when the government was fighting off an amendment in favour of CHCs.

It had apparently found an ally in Melinda Letts from the Long Term Medical Conditions Alliance charity. She had written to every member of the Lords urging them to abandon their attempt to rebuild the CHCs and denouncing this as "political point scoring". She claimed many grassroots groups were "alive with anticipation about the possibilities" offered by PALS and "eager to participate".

Whoops! Earl Howe then spotted that the label on his letter was identical to that on letters he receives from Alan Milburn at the DoH. Howe wondered if Letts was a government "stooge" and mused: "I should be delighted to be told I am wrong in concluding that the letter was dispatched centrally by the department of health."

Letts admitted to the *Eye* that the DoH had sent on her letter but denied she was a stooge. She claimed her members wanted to get their message across and she was "happy to take support where I can get it". The DoH told the *Eye* its job was to "assist the passage of the bill through Parliament", and so it would only circulate letters to the Lords which backed the government's case.

PS: Only 23 of the 117 member organisations of Letts' charity had voted to approach the Lords in this way.

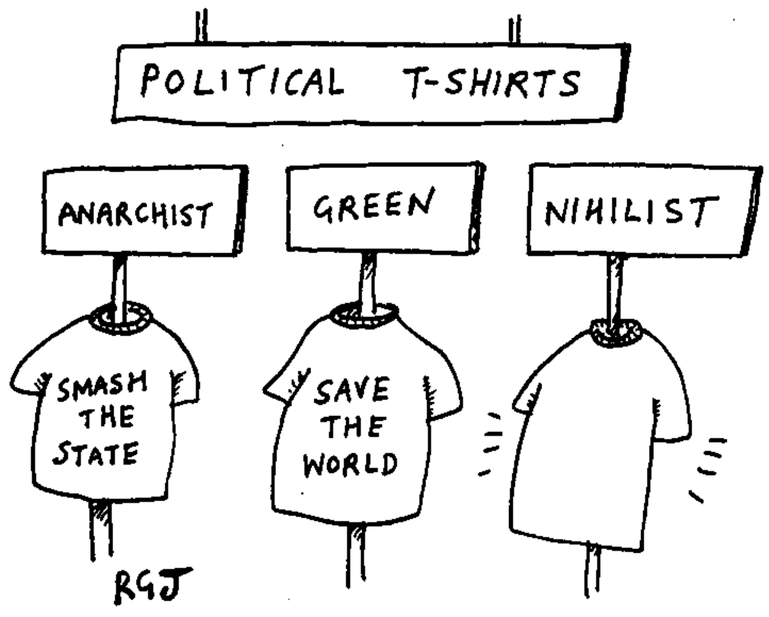
PPS: Letts was a member of Milburn's "Patient Empowerment Modernisation Action Team" and sits on the Commission for Health Improvement.

"NEW" Labour's favourite private healthcare boss, Dr Chai Patel, is evidently confident that Ukprocure, his latest venture in tandem with BBC chairman Gavyn Davies, will prove a success.

Patel is chairman of the internet firm which specialises in buying goods for the NHS, in which Gordon Brown's buddy Davies owns more than half the shares worth nearly £1m. It was recently reported that Westminster Health Care, the third largest private healthcare company in the UK which is run by Patel who is also a 10 percent shareholder, is on the verge of selling The Priory chain of rehabilitation clinics to venture capitalists Doughty Hanson for £295m. Patel is also poised to sell Westminster Senior Living, a division of the company that owns 90 nursing homes and stroke rehabilitation centres, to venture capitalists 3i for £250m.

It is small wonder Patel wants to get rid of this cumbersome elderly care business to focus on the more lucrative internet market. Over the past year the *Eye* has reported a series of problems in Westminster's care homes. The company attracted criticism in March and April last year over its decision to close a special unit for 22 mentally-ill elderly patients at the Thistle Hill nursing home in Knaresborough. Despite a year of critical inspections, Westminster Health Care failed to take steps which might have prevented the closure.

More recently, in December 2001 an independent inspector was called into Lynde House, a £600-per-week home for the elderly run by Westminster in Twickenham, following allegations of neglect and suffering (see *Eye* 1043). These included residents being left in their own waste, unexplained bruising and delays in patients receiving medical attention and food and water. No doubt Patel will find the purchase of medical products over the internet a cinch after the difficult business of caring for the elderly.



TORY leader Iain Duncan Smith has yet to land a blow on the government (whose wounds remain self-inflicted) and his attempts to do so are growing increasingly desperate.

The opposition leader has written the foreword to the current edition of Crawford's *Directory of City Connections*.

"The past year has been a worrying one in terms of UK inward investment... I would argue that the strengths Britain has enjoyed as an attractive destination for investment are centred upon the business environment created by the Conservatives when we were in power... The Railtrack affair marked a real turning point in Labour's relationship with business... we cannot have a strong infrastructure unless the country benefits from healthy investment. No political party should abandon that simple truth."

Ignoring the fact that the investment-starved infrastructure of Railtrack was created by the Tories, is Crawford's the only place that Duncan Smith can get a political speech published?

GOOD to see that ambitious young Tory MP Tim Collins, shadow spokesman for the cabinet office, has his finger firmly on the political pulse.

His website www.timcollins.co.uk – which boasts of being "updated weekly" – offers the following advice to anyone who, for some strange reason, might desire more information on the Conservative Party: "There is a first-rate Conservative Party website at www.conservatives.com which provides full information about the party and also carries daily updates of press releases, speeches and announcements from its key figures such as party leader William Hague."

First-rate indeed!

WHEN the Scottish Nationalist Party (SNP) proposed to use the tax-varying powers of the Scottish parliament to forgo the penny tax cut in Gordon Brown's 1999 budget, the slavishly pro-Labour *Daily Record* lambasted the Nats mercilessly.

"In eight weeks' time, this will be remembered as the weekend it all went wrong for Alex Salmond," declared the *Record* editorial on 13 March 1999. "The weekend when the slick mask fell from the SNP and the party was revealed for what it is; a bunch of old fashioned tax and spenders who want to make every family in Scotland poorer." An opinion poll conducted exclusively for the *Record* by pollsters Scottish Opinion showed that 63 percent of Scots were against the so-called Tartan tax.

Cut to 2002 and the news that Gordon Brown has added an extra penny to national insurance, however, and the *Daily Record* has performed a volte face. The *Record's* opinion that it is a "price worth paying for Britain's NHS" in a budget which "reconnected New Labour to the founding fathers of the Welfare State in 1947 and was a renewed declaration of faith in the Welfare State" is apparently backed up by public opinion. An exclusive poll showing that 64 percent of Scottish voters believe the government is right to increase national insurance to fund the NHS was conducted for the *Record* by... Scottish Opinion.

'Backbiter'

BANKERS

GORDON BROWN's budget speech made much of the report into financing the NHS by former National Westminster bank chairman Derek Wanless, known to business colleagues as Wanless Chinder.

Wanless concluded that the NHS needed much more money and that the best way of raising it was by "mainstream" taxation. A particularly exciting contribution to mainstream taxation was made by the Nat West during Wanless's chairmanship between 1992 and 1999.

The bank sold a highly effective tax avoidance scam to its richer clients, the trick being to exploit the rules for tax relief on investment as set out in the Tory government's business expansion scheme (BES). The scheme allowed investors in shares in new businesses to claim tax relief on the money they invested, provided they left the money in the firms for a minimum of five years.

Natwest (and Barclays) encouraged their clients to invest the money and get the tax relief, and then to borrow the purchase money back from the banks, paying it back only when they sold the shares. By this device investors got the full tax relief but parted with their money for only six months rather than five years. This was described in a later court case as a "well-known tax avoidance device".

It was too gross even for the Tories, whose finance act 1993 banned the relief on the scheme for any shares bought after 16 March that year. There was a rush to buy shares before that date, and the companies allotted them to the lucky clients before the cut-off date. But the shares were not *registered* until much later. A long and expensive legal dispute followed.

The question was whether the purchase of these shares qualified for tax relief. A judge found that they did qualify. The court of appeal by a majority disagreed. Finally, in the summer of 1995, the case arrived at the House of Lords where, again by a majority, their lordships found for the Revenue and disallowed the tax relief. But in the two and a half years the case wound its way through the courts, the rich clients kept getting their tax relief. Many, many millions extra were made for the rich clients to justify the fat fees paid by them to the banks, including the bank led by the champion of mainstream taxation, Mr Wanless Chinder.

Down on the Fish Farm

DICHCLORVOS, a highly toxic organophosphate most fish farmers used to treat captive stock for sea lice infestations, has been banned in UK – but some fish farmers still have permission to use it. If humans come into contact with it, there is a risk it could seriously disrupt their nervous system.

Dichclorvos is an active ingredient in a number of household products such as fly sprays and its use has now been banned on advice from the Advisory Committee on Pesticides, the Committee on Mutagenicity, the Committee on Carcinognicity, the government's chief medical officer and even Sir John Krebs' Food Standards Agency.

Do Scotland's foreign-owned multinational fish farm companies use this cancer-causing organophosphate to treat sea lice in their salmon cages? Has Seap (the Scottish environment pollution agency), which after a carefully "scientific" study gave the all-clear for Dichclorvos to be used in fish farms, withdrawn its consents?

Er, no – because Seap doesn't know how many Dichlorvos consents it issued or to whom. According to Intrafish, the aquaculture industry information bulletin, Seap says: "The process of going through registers to find all the dichclorvos consents, so that they could be withdrawn, would deflect scarce manpower from the task of processing applications for the use of the current sea lice treatments."

Nothing to worry about there, then.

'Old Trout'

BRUSSELS SPROUTS

ANYONE hoping Tony Blair's refusal to allow a proper inquiry into his mishandling of the foot-and-mouth epidemic would be made up for by the inquiry staged by the European parliament is going to be disappointed. The MEPs' efforts are turning out to be a sick joke.

Part of the problem is Senora Redondo, their bad-tempered Spanish chairperson, who began her career as a civil servant for Franco's fascist government. La Redondo is particularly fond of the sound of her own voice, which causes problems since she only speaks Spanish, meaning that when the MEPs recently visited Britain for a series of hearings, her lengthy rants had to be followed by hours of droning translation.

Another drawback is that few MEPs have done much homework, so have little idea what it is they are meant to be looking into. Their main concern is to play politics by chipping in with statements designed to catch media attention back home.

But the greatest drawback is the investigation's complete lack of structure. A succession of government witnesses like Nick Brown or Lord Whitty turn up to read out prepared statements. MEPs' questions are then lumped together in batches, giving all the witnesses a chance to comment on whichever bits of the questioning take their fancy.

As an ex-civil servant, la Redondo is notably deferential to "official" witnesses, like Brown and Whitty, who are allowed to drool on way over their allotted time and to get away with absurd claims without being challenged. But when it comes to witnesses who challenge the government line, Redondo can barely bring herself to be polite. Having been summoned to Brussels, vaccination expert Dr Keith Sumption was allowed barely five minutes.

Almost all the documents circulated by the inquiry secretariat, moreover, are from official sources. Unofficial papers, however expert and relevant to proper understanding of the crisis, are ignored. And when researchers asked for tapes or transcripts of the evidence to check what witnesses had said, they were told these were being kept under lock and key. Tapes can only be listened to under supervision. Otherwise MEPs must make do with a summary containing only what seems relevant to the inquiry's German rapporteur.

All this was exemplified when the MEPs were bussed up to Gretna for what has so far been their only public hearing in the UK. Most of the hall was taken up by MEPs and officials. Farmers, vets and members of the public had to squeeze down the sides. Scheduled for two hours, the meeting began with an hour and forty minutes of self-serving statements from Scottish politicians, NFU officials and other government apologists. Critical witnesses, including two outspoken senior vets Roger Windsor and Alan Richardson, were allowed just a few minutes at the end. At least when Redondo tried to cut short Nick Green of Heart of Cumbria, he managed to wave her impatient interjections aside until he had finished.

Astonishingly this farce is billed to last a whole year, during which the inquiry is holding nine hearings of three hours each, making only 27 hours of chaotic hearings in all. This compares with the inquiry by Northumberland county council, which crammed in 30 hours of hearings in just five days, eliciting more information than the MEPs will manage to dig out in an inquiry taking 50 times as long, at well over ten times the expense.

Plans to allow sex-enhancing drug Viagra to be sold over the counter could flop because of growing concern among MPs about the health risks.

Independent On Sunday

EYE TV

MacIntyre Investigates (BBC1)

YOU may have encountered a show on MTV called *Jackass*, in which skatepunks endure semi-dangerous pratfalls for your viewing pleasure. It's an offbeat hit, of course, but no self-respecting grown-up would admit to watching it. Instead, for our vicarious thrills the BBC has Donal MacIntyre – a *Jackass* with a conscience.

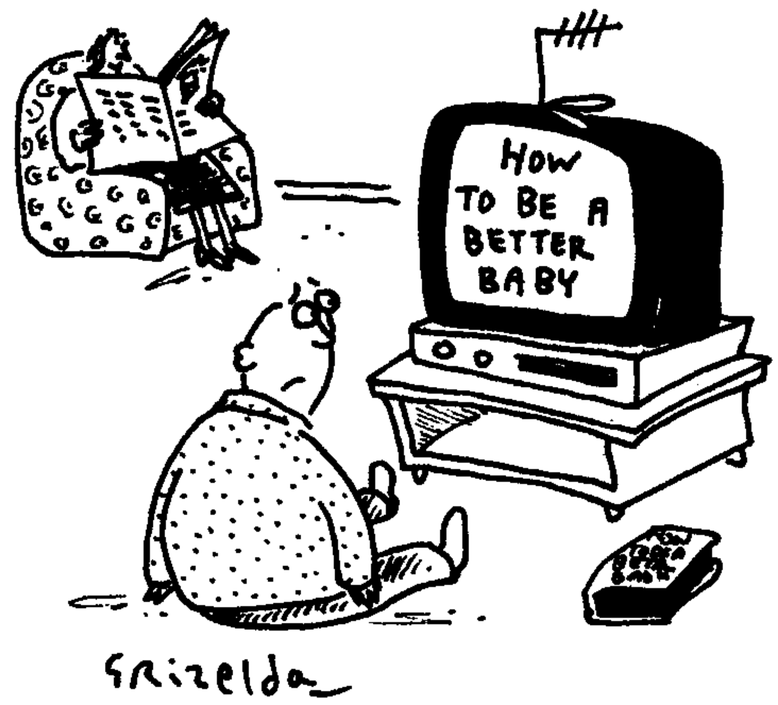
In 1999's *MacIntyre Undercover* our man picked up the sword of truth and ran with it, slaying football hooligans, a Gillingham care home and the Elite modelling agency. The technique was *The Cook Report* with knobs on, marrying Bond-style hidden cameras with MacIntyre's palpable deathwish to catch the crooks in the act.

Yet because MacIntyre and crew insisted on continually reminding us of their probity ("We have a determination to reveal the truth"), the spoilsports in the press began to ask questions. Three years on, the programme's track record contains several sizeable potholes, with numerous writs served for wasting police time and "imaginative" editing – such as omitting words like "not". In particular, the exposé of the Elite modelling agency, which shocked the world by suggesting men who employ models are perverts, left the BBC settling out of court and issuing an apology – Elite, it said, had been "unfairly portrayed", which is really saying something when you consider the shitehawks under scrutiny.

Regardless of his methods, MacIntyre's forays into the underworld were a ratings winner. The Beeb could at last claim to be producing serious, popular journalism: the Reithian ideal. The ratings also helped justify the money – at £1.5 million, *MacIntyre Undercover* was the most expensive current affairs series ever made.

But if there was one thing everyone agreed, it was that big Mac could never repeat the trick; and no one was more certain than the loveable ferret himself: "*MacIntyre Undercover* is a one-off series and it's the last time I go undercover. It won't be safe or viable from now on."

Well, something coaxed him out of his bunker because here he is again. And although there's been a subtle change to the title, our man is indisputably still undercover, bedecked with transducers and sporting all manner of elaborate facial hair. The exposés continue – this new series consists of three films about street crime, drugs and Albanian sex slaves. But MacIntyre should have stayed in his safe-house: as he himself predicted, going undercover when you're a household name just isn't "viable". As a result, these bombshells are about as startling as a cap gun.



Last week's opener, for example, purported to be an investigation into mugging, conveniently scheduled amidst the Damilola Taylor verdict and the current parliamentary debate. In a bid to find out the "motivation" of street criminals and what they do with their booty, MacIntyre wandered round Brixton with a bugged mobile phone and tried to get mugged. After two nights of comments like "aren't you the guy from that football club programme", he'd encountered more Good Samaritans than delinquents and returned to HQ admitting "I haven't felt threatened once".

As desperation set in, MacIntyre began waving an expensive mobile phone at any passing black person, saying things like, "I am totally lost in a dark alley that would be eminently suitable for a mugging." You began to feel sorry for the mugger. It still took him a further 40 minutes to get the moneyshot, and this elicited the first of several clunking soliloquies – mugging is unpleasant. To prove it, Donal cried on camera.

Next question: why do they do it? The proper answer is because a muppet with a fake beard asked for it, but Donal has another scoop: people steal for money. And where does all the contraband go? Yes, they sell it (see previous question).

Conclusion: crime pays and mugging's best avoided. Some exposé. Coming up this week, the "new dance drug" Yaba, or Methamphetamine, which is so new it was used in a nasal spray in the 30s and made illegal in 1970. Two-and-a-half years ago the *Observer* ran a feature warning of the drug's renewed popularity.

So the stories aren't stories, which leaves us with what? Nothing more than MacIntyre – that lilting brogue, those limpid blue eyes – in self-induced peril. Essentially, the man without a face has a very nice face. Now that it's also a very famous face, it rather puts the skids on our intrepid crusader, because personality into anonymity doesn't go.

'The Zapper'

DUMB BRITAIN

The Enemy Within, BBC1

Nigel Lythgoe: Which of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World would you have found in Babylon?

Contestant: The Hanging Baskets.

National Lottery Jet Set, BBC1

Eamonn Holmes: What's the name of the playwright commonly known by the initials G.B.S.?

Contestant: William Shakespeare.

GMTV

Presenter: In which direction do the hands of a clock travel?

Contestant: Anti-clockwise.

Presenter: If I travel at 60 miles an hour, how far do I travel in ten minutes?

Contestant: Two hundred thousand miles.

MEDIA NEWS

THE BBC's 6pm news bulletin is now routinely used to plug forthcoming BBC productions. On quiet news days, viewers can expect more than one of these trails, news editors being happy to manufacture a news story and shoe-horn them into the running order.

Take the item on 18 April about working mothers. It turned out to be a straightforward plug for *Working Mums* handed out by Huw Edwards, "which you can see tonight on BBC2". It was followed by an equally spurious news item alleging that "man may have walked the earth with dinosaurs after all".

The item, about the discovery of a prehistoric lemur, proved only that man may have walked the earth a full 64 million years *after* dinosaurs became extinct. But that small detail didn't stop Fergus Walsh using lavish clips from the BBC's *Walking With Dinosaurs* in his six o'clock "briefing".

ITV's evening news continues to maintain the highest editorial standards.

On 22 April the bulletin included extensive coverage of the Bafta awards and a preview of a *Tonight With Trevor MacDonald* interview with ailing American actor Michael J Fox. By sheer luck both programmes were shown on ITV later that night, or as newsreader Dermot Murnaghan informed viewers, "right after *Coronation Street*".

WHEN a light aircraft crashed into the Pirelli Building in Milan, CNN used a live link from an Italian news network and its own translator in the studio.

As the Italian newscaster chattered away, the translator, probably a second generation Italian-American hauled up from the CNN canteen, began: "The prices are low and we are open on Saturdays... oops, I think that's a commercial."

LESS than a year after the BBC announced its great biscuit cutting drive, at an annual saving of £210,000, the British Library has followed Greg Dyke's lead.

A recent internal memo told staff: "In the interests of economy, a meeting hospitality option of tea and coffee without biscuits is being introduced at both St Pancras and Boston Spa. Exec team has confirmed that the 'no biscuit' option should be used for all internal meetings, the 'with biscuit' option being reserved for those meetings involving external guests or VIPs."

Custard cream manufacturers won't be as badly affected as they were by Auntie's biscuit ban though. The move will only save between £5,000 and £10,000 a year.

HACKS on the *Sun* were left in no doubt about the grave significance of TV presenter Ulrika Jonsson's announcement that her affair with England manager Sven Goran Eriksson was at an end, after watching coverage of the moving event on their News Corp stable mate, Sky News.

"Their affair came to an end yesterday with Ulrika's announcement," reported the *Currant Bun* on 25 April. "Its importance was made clear when Sky TV's political editor Adam Boulton broke into his analysis of Prime Minister's Questions to read her statement."

Could this be the *same* Sky News that a few days earlier had won a Bafta for its serious news coverage?

THE organisers of the annual Istanbul International Film Festival will think twice in future before inviting directors of British gangster flicks to speak at the festival.

Introducing a screening of his film *My Kingdom*, a reworking of *King Lear* as a gangster movie set in modern day Liverpool, film-maker Don Boyd announced how happy he was to be in Istanbul as he and the film's star Richard Harris had decided on 11 September to show the film in a Muslim country as soon as possible.

Perhaps Boyd could be forgiven for not knowing that Turkey's language and culture is very different from that of Arab states and that even Turkey's Islamic extremists expressed their outrage at the events of 11 September. But having spent a couple of days at the festival he should at least have noticed that the festival's audiences were mainly members of Turkey's intellectual, non-religious middle class who were unlikely to be impressed by a foreigner describing them simply as "Muslim".

The problem was put succinctly by Boyd's translator, who explained in Turkish that he hadn't the faintest idea what Don meant by connecting 11 September with showing a gangster film in Istanbul, a comment which drew roars of laughter from the audience. Presumably the festival's organisers were too polite to point out that "Don" in Turkish means "pants".

WHEN Tony Benn's barnstorming tour of Britain arrived before a packed house in London's Old Vic recently, there were gasps of astonishment before guests sat down.

Heading for the upper galleries were none other than Neil and Christine Hamilton. Could this ridiculous pair be considering following the Bennatollah with a public speaking tour? At least Benn keeps his clothes on.

MICROSOFT's attempt to break into the computer gaming console market is not going according to plan.

Bill Gates's mega-firm recently announced that it was reducing the price of its new Xbox console by £100 to bring it into line with the market leader, Sony Playstation 2. But Microsoft has not given up hope. A press release issued by the company on 18 April included an enthusiastic quote from a representative of Electronic Arts, one of the world's biggest games companies, whose support is key to the console's success. "Xbox enjoyed a great launch in Europe – fantastic product and fantastic games," Electronic Arts VP David Gardner was quoted as saying. "It's great they're making a move that will enable more customers to enjoy Xbox."

Gardner's effusive praise is in sharp contrast with the words of the president of Electronic Arts, John Riccitiello, who a couple of weeks earlier told Bloomberg financial news service: "Microsoft has had its teeth kicked in, in both Europe and Japan." Has someone at Microsoft had a quiet word with Electronic Arts and persuaded the company to change its line on Xbox?

GOING LIVE

ITN News went live on 15 April to a hapless Julian Manyon standing in the dark somewhere in Afghanistan while giving the latest on Osama bin Laden's recent video appearance.

"What will the tape mean to the Royal Marines who are about to start operations in Afghanistan?" asked Dermot Murnaghan.

"It means that the Royal Marines will be hunting the world's most wanted man, who may or may not be in Afghanistan," was Manyon's reply.

AD NAUSEAM

THE last few months have seen an impressive array of meaningless splurge from three of the four major mobile phone companies. Highlights have included Vodafone asking us "How Are You?" (Fine. Go away) and T-Mobile launching with "Get more". Coupled with a stock-shot montage of "ordinary" people "connecting", this is the kind of unforgettable advertising that makes you long for a Kwik-Fit Fitter.

Now it's the turn of BT, aka Cellnet, BT Cellnet, Genie, mmO2 plc and soon to be known as O2. Relaunching a company that's had more names than a stray dog was always going to be a slog. But the way BT has gone about it has hardly helped.

When the O2 marketing was divvied up last July, the advertising was given to AMV, because with its global network BBDO it was one of perhaps 10 big London shops that could manage a pan-European launch. And BBDO's European head Michael Baulk is good friends with O2's CEO Peter Erskine.

So imagine the hoo-ha in adland when, just weeks before the launch, BT dumped AMV and gave the business to an agency that was only two weeks old. The lucky recipient of this £100m windfall was a start-up called Vallance Carruthers Coleman Priest. It wasn't just the names that seemed unlikely.

A brief look at the dramatis personae is intriguing. O2's marketing manager is Will Harris. Harris cut his teeth in advertising at an agency called WCRS, where he worked on Orange, alongside two men named Charles Vallance and Rooney Carruthers. Harris then moved to AMV to work on BT Cellnet, before swapping sides and working for BT itself.

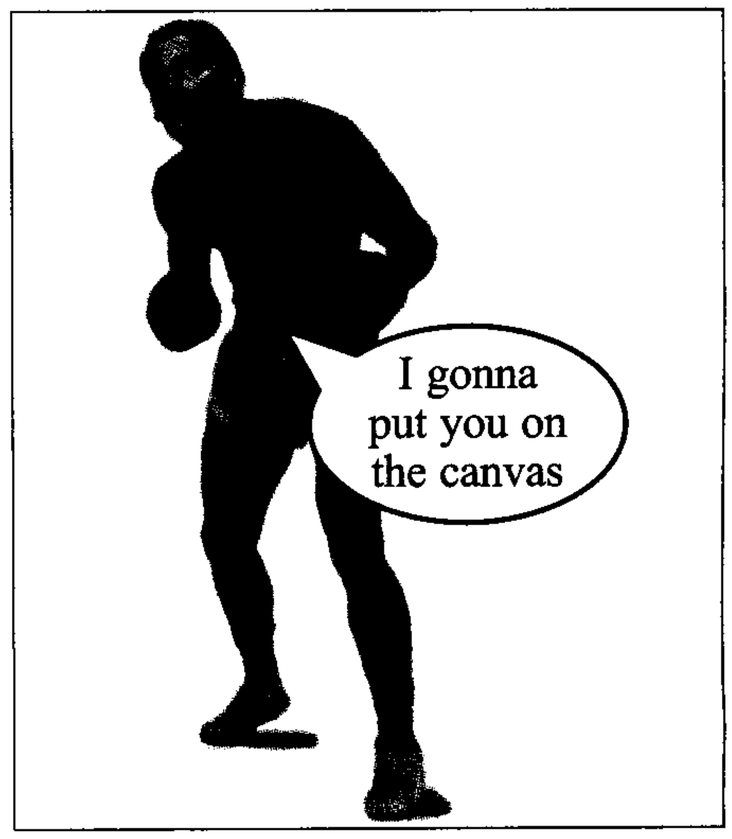
Last year Orange moved its business from WCRS, which promptly won the Vodafone account. This means that Charles Vallance has now planned campaigns for three of the big four telecoms accounts in less than two years. Vodafone was so concerned at the potential for breaches in client confidentiality that it made WCRS hold Vallance to his contract when he announced his new agency. He is therefore currently enjoying "gardening leave" to stop him from telling O2 all of Vodafone's most cunning strategies — bombshells like "How Are You?", presumably.

So if telecoms advertising remains perennially bland, it's because in the last few years the same cosy cabal of men with funny names has created most of it. "May sees the start of something new," says the current O2 teaser. If only.

PS: O2's new advertising just in! It features ordinary people surrounded by bubbles. It begins with a teaser campaign, much like a company called Orange once used. The tagline is "See What You Can Do." This should not be confused with "Get More" or "How Are You?"

SPLIT personalities

Bob Moore



Muhammad Dali

SUPERMODELS

KERBER

NAOMI CAMPBELL HAS HIRED AN 'EATING-TRAINER'
La Bulimerie
HE'S BRILLIANT!!! ...HE HELPS ME WHEN IT COMES TO ORDERING FOOD...
...HE KNOWS HOW TO ACTUALLY TALK TO SOMEONE IN A NICE NORMAL WAY... ...WITHOUT HAVING A TANTRUM!!!
WAITER!
WOW!!!
THAT'S INCREDIBLE!!!

DOING THE ROUNDS

What, no public health?

HIDDEN away in the Wanless report on the future of the NHS was the ousted Nat West bank manager's estimation of the effect successful reforms will have. In 2022, when we may be paying £184bn a year, the NHS will "help" to increase life expectancy from 80 to 81.6 years for men and 83.8 to 85.5 years for women. So, a 2 percent increase over 20 years for all that dosh. This is less to do with the NHS and more to do with the limits of scientific medicine, but it'll be interesting to see what the new independent NHS auditor makes of it.

In the last century our life expectancy increased by 30 years; most of that down to improvements in public health. The biggest challenge facing the UK's health has nothing to do with lack of medicine: it's the fact that the rich live 10 years longer than the poor. In a sense we already have mass involuntary euthanasia: it's called living in the north of England.

A less charitable view is not to blame poverty for the state of our health, but the fact that we've become a population of risk-taking, smoking, alcoholic, accident-prone lard-buckets. Half the NHS budget is deemed to go on illnesses that are (in theory) preventable. Without changing this the NHS is doomed.

Either way the specialty of public health should remain more important (though less recognised) than clinical medicine, were it not being slashed by "new" Labour reforms. District health authorities were abolished in an unseemly rush on 1 April (Eye 1050), with no clear structure of how to transfer the expertise of public health consultants and non-medical specialists to the new primary care trusts which now control 75 percent of the budgets.

Public health resources were already scarce when concentrated in 95 health authorities, but expert teams were built up over years. Now they're going to be spread thinly across 315 primary care trusts. In some areas staff from a single department will now cater for five PCTs. Nearly all their time will be taken by travel, management and corporate responsibilities, with little left to develop programmes that might improve public health. Many of the workforce are part time (especially women) and don't believe they can provide a good standard of work in the new structure.

A likely outcome is that PCTs, already under great strain getting to grips with the range of their responsibilities, will cherry pick the aspects of public health they think they need (eg screening programmes) and overlook the rest. But without the public health expertise to help plan how resources can be more fairly allocated, inequalities will increase. Labour's much-trumpeted cancer plan and the national service frameworks for other diseases also rely heavily on public health consultants to deliver them. But there is a real danger that individual primary care trusts won't be able to recruit a viable public health team.

As one public health consultant put it: "To say that there must always be change and reform is to forget the fundamental public health questions of what is the evidence for it? And what will be the health impact? Right now there is considerable evidence that successive reorganisations have been wasteful of time, money and people, and have not delivered service improvement."

As with all political health reforms, Labour's "biggest shake up in 50 years" has largely been made up on the hoof. It hasn't been piloted so there is no evidence to predict whether it will work or not. However, it will almost certainly have some unpleasant side effects – particularly for public health. Let's hope the independent auditor picks them up before it's too late.

PS: Following the Eye's exposure of the shambolic funding of genito-urinary medicine (clap clinics, Eye 1049), the Commons health select committee has agreed to consider the problem later this month. Watch this space.

M.D.

SIGNAL FAILURES

Disintegrated transport policy

AFTER five years of banging on about the importance of integrated transport, the Labour government still hasn't joined up its own transport policies.

Last week transport secretary Stephen Byers hit out at bus firms for taking high subsidies and providing worsening services. He is supposedly working to a target of 50 percent more train passengers and 80 percent more rail-freight by 2010. But at the same time the government is working hard to undermine railways and public transport.

Gordon Brown's budget granted car drivers and lorry firms yet more concessions. Labour has backed off from targets for road-traffic reduction or a tax on workplace car parks, has undermined attempts to enforce speed limits (*Eye* 1035) and has allowed traffic wardens to dwindle to almost nil in some areas.

The reason? Labour is too afraid of the *Daily Mail* to question the value the country gets from massive hidden subsidies to the road system (where congestion costs the economy about £20bn a year) and civil aviation. Instead it attacks the pathetic bus industry. There is no sign that Byers or anyone else in his dysfunctional department has noticed that policies encouraging more car journeys harm the bus industry.

That industry is easy prey because two-thirds is in the hands of five of Britain's most unloved companies. Since buses were privatised in 1986, passenger numbers have fallen by a third outside London (the only place where buses are still regulated), while overall demand for transport has grown and bus use has increased in most other European countries. Government policies are partly to blame; but most UK buses are run as they were 20 years ago, ignoring the growth of out-of-town developments and Sunday shopping.

Having taken over many small operators or forced them off the road, the big five are building empires by acquiring overseas transport operations. In Britain they push up fares as passenger numbers fall and hold local government to ransom by threatening to axe services if subsidy isn't raised. Competition between the big five is minimal. Last year the cost of subsidised bus contracts rose by 21 percent and total subsidy exceeded £1bn.

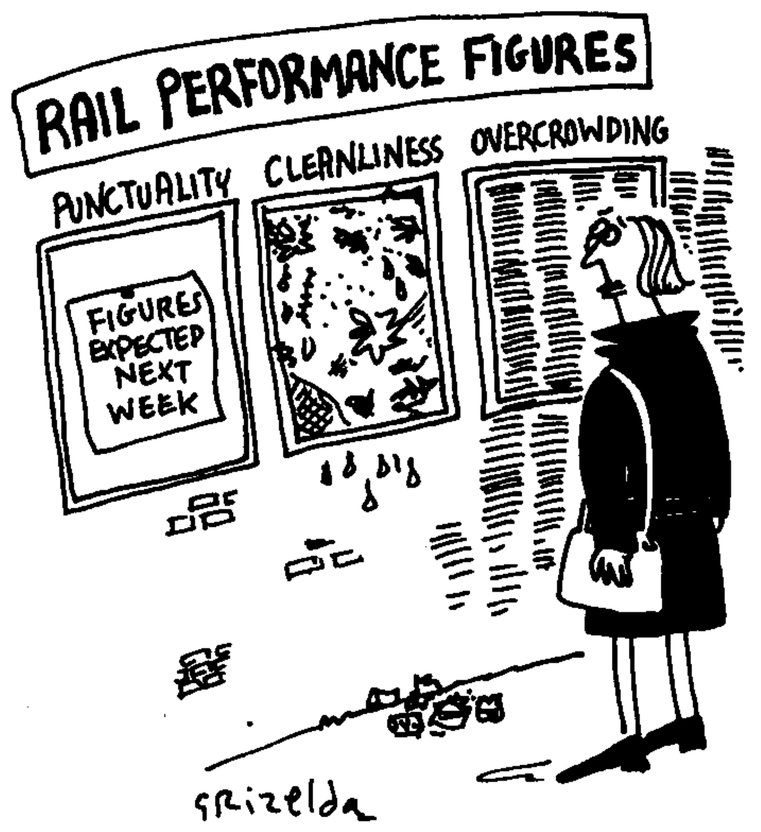
The big companies have ensured that buses outside the largest cities are regarded as poor people's transport. And their executives are rewarded handsomely for this. Phil White, chief executive of National Express, received £1.1m last year, with a 14 percent rise in basic salary. Arriva chief executive Bob Davies received £527,459.

Bizarrely the Tories awarded many rail franchises to bus companies. Even stranger, Labour is aware of the companies' shortcomings but has sanctioned the transfer of two franchises to First Group; two to Arriva; and awarded a new one to Go-Ahead. It is giving Stagecoach another 20 years with South West Trains.

Bus companies now wholly or partly run 21 of the 25 rail franchises. Arriva's trains division broke even in 2000 but accrued a profit of £11.5m in 2001 by not employing enough drivers and not running 20,000 scheduled trains (*Eyes passim*). Despite such dismal performance on the roads and railways, the big bus firms are still shortlisted for new rail franchises.

PS: The strategic rail authority will be keen to hand even more to bus companies under the chairmanship of Richard Bowker. In one of his first speeches in that post, Bowker boasted about his father's background in the British bus industry (dad's a Stagecoach high-flier). Perhaps he hasn't seen a graph of that industry's embarrassing decline in passengers and market share.

'Dr B. Ching'



DOWN ON THE FARM

EARLIER this year sheep farmers were distraught to discover that intestinal worms in sheep had become resistant to the third and last class of wormer, the ivermectins.

Worms resistant to one or both of the other types of wormer have increased drastically in recent years, leaving farmers with no choice but ivermectin. Predictably, the selective pressure of using just one drug has produced resistance to that as well. This had already happened in other countries, notably New Zealand, which despite its clean image relies on wormers even more than the UK. With no new chemicals on the horizon, British farmers too now live in fear of the worm turning on their farms.

Sheep farmers have other problems too. Liverfluke, a serious internal parasite of sheep on wet ground, has on some farms developed resistance to the leading flukicide, while sheep scab mites and lice are also showing resistance to insecticides.

Not that arable farmers are scoffing. After years of easy broad-leaved weed control, last year chickweed and now poppies have been found which are resistant to sulfonylurea, a principal herbicide from the ALS-inhibitor group. There are now 71 weed species in the world which have evolved resistance to ALS herbicides.

Farmers though are used to struggling with herbicide-resistant weeds because grassweeds such as ryegrass, wild oats and especially blackgrass have long been difficult and expensive to control. Perhaps their experience will be useful when "superweeds" created from the crossing of deliberately herbicide-tolerant crops arrive here as they have in Canada.

If only that were the only problem. Unfortunately fungicides, without which modern arable farming would not exist, have a very short life because fungal diseases rapidly breed resistant strains. Already the latest group, the wonderdrug "strobilurins", are useless against mildew in wheat, with other diseases expected to outwit the pesticides soon.

And so it goes on. Most notoriously, the profligate use of antibiotics has led to resistant disease bacteria such as salmonella which then infect people. Wherever pesticides are used the target organisms evolve an immune strain and the rate at which new pesticides become redundant is accelerating rapidly. This is not a surprise because the whole direction of farming favours vulnerability to pests and pesticide use: specialisation, monocultures, larger scale, less rotation, breeding for yield, the separation of animal and crop husbandry.

Within agriculture there is a flap about each specific resistance as it arises and grudging advice from the chemists to use products sparingly and rotate different types. Yet nowhere is there to be found a general discussion on where this is all going. Agrochemical directors are happy if they believe their products will see them through to the golden handshake. New pesticides cost tens of millions to develop and there are absolute limits to the chemistry, especially given the ever more demanding health and environmental criteria. In many areas we seem to have hit the buffers already.

Pesticide farming has lasted barely half a lifetime – a brief flowering – but is it sustainable? I wouldn't bet my life on it.

'Gumboot'

ROTTEN BOROUGHS

VOTE EARLY, VOTE OFTEN

IN THE last *Eye* we noted that Hackney was a bizarre choice for an experiment in all-postal voting for the 2 May local elections.

A year ago two councillors, both from the orthodox Jewish community, were jailed for their part in a vote-rigging scam which involved the creation of non-existent voters and the manipulation of proxy votes. Since the *Eye* appeared, Hackney's returning officer Max Caller has reminded election agents in the borough about the rules governing electoral registration and proxy voting. This is because of a strange blip in the number of proxies requested in the borough's Cazenove ward.

While in most wards proxies have only been requested in twos and threes, in Cazenove there are 35. This is thought to arise from the large number of orthodox Jewish students from the ward studying at religious colleges in Israel. Fair enough: except that students who spend most of the year abroad are not entitled to register to vote in local elections, although they may do so in parliamentary and European ones. Caller tells the *Eye*: "If... I am not satisfied they are properly resident at their home address I have the ability to remove them from the register and this might result in challenge."

Meanwhile Hackney has included a pencil with every postal ballot paper sent to voters. One *Eye* reader observes: "No doubt a corresponding order for rubbers will be delivered for use at the count." Don't you find such cynicism corrosive?

● **FAREWELL speech of the year was made by Brent Tory councillor Sean O'Sullivan, who is not standing in this week's elections. As *Eye* 995 noted, Cllr O'Sullivan has not always seen eye-to-eye with his group leader, Bob Blackman. Now, he says "enough is enough" and he is stepping down. At the Brent council meeting last week, among a long list of the Tory group's faults, he complained of "the links to certain developers with very large wallets" and "the number of masons in senior roles in the group". In fact, observed O'Sullivan, "I have spent 16 years in the company of men who choose to roll their trouser legs up for fun". Whatever can he mean?**

STRANGE BEDS FELLOWS

PRIVATE EYE's unlikely Man of the Month is cuddly Stephen Byers, who has ruled that councillors and officers must no longer get council taxpayers to pay if they want to sue the press for libel.

The DTLR secretary's junior local government minister, Alan Whitehead, told the Commons last month that officers and councillors "have suitable avenues open to them to obtain a remedy without recourse to litigation. Public criticism of an officer or councillor may sometimes be harsh and unfair, but that is an occupational hazard." Perhaps someone should tell Tony Blair.

The ruling follows the embarrassing failure of libel actions brought by three Bedford borough council officers against *Bedfordshire on Sunday* newspaper. Council solicitor Michael Gough and his assistant Andy Darkoh lost their action against *BoS* and Tory agent Stewart Lister in the high court in March, while the council's chief executive Shaun Field won only one of two claims against the newspaper.

The case arose from a press release issued by Lister and two *BoS* articles in 2000 which concerned the way officers had dealt with 86 votes overlooked in the council election of May 2000. The decision meant the officers had to pay 80 percent of the newspaper's £600,000 costs – and councillors nobly decided to pass the bill on to the taxpayer. Thanks to Saintly Steve, however, no other council will be able to get away with such a trick again.

PS Barrister Andy Darkoh was back in court last month, when he pleaded guilty to causing actual bodily harm to *BoS* reporter Oliver Adam. The court heard that he knocked Adam to the ground and smashed his camera after the hack took a photograph of him in Bedford High St. "Taking a photograph does not amount to an invasion of privacy," said Judge Findlay Baker. He gave Darkoh a 12-month conditional discharge and ordered him to pay £150 costs plus £200 compensation for the camera.

MASSAGE PALAVER

THE AUTHOR of a £35,000 exercise in stress management for Isle of Wight council, which included Indian face massage and tree-hugging for council officers, has gone sick herself — presumably due to the stress of an internal investigation into how she reached the sickness statistics on which the "need" for the project was based.

News of the anti-stress day last February, organised by the council's training manager Annette Culshaw, amused the national press, but islanders facing a record 14.7 percent hike in council tax were less impressed by the new age nonsense.

Stress levels rose when leading councillors and Ms Culshaw could not agree on whether the cost to IoW Council of sickness absence was £1.5m a year, £2m a year or £3m a year. The water was further muddied by resources supremo Cllr Reg Barry refusing to answer written questions from the public on the figures at a council meeting. This infuriated officials who had spent time and effort preparing a response. It is believed this anger fuelled staff allegations that Ms Culshaw had, er, massaged the figures to justify the day out. Whether the massage was ayurvedic, Thai or shiatsu is not yet clear.

AWASH WITH CASH

HOW LONG will oil-rich Shetland Island Council (SIC) remain the UK's wealthiest local authority? A recent report in the *Shetland Times* paints a bleak picture — £17m lost by the council's charitable trust during the year ended 31 March.

The loss was incurred by the SIC's trading arm, Shetland Leasing and Property Development Ltd, usually abbreviated, appropriately, to Slap. This scratch-my-back club for Shetland businesses poured upwards of £10m into a venture called Shetland Offshore Environmental Services (Soes). Now everyone is blaming everyone else for the disaster. Auditors Ernst & Young have been "highly critical" of the Soes board. SIC chief executive Morgan Goodlad blames Slapdash. Slapdash chairman Bertie Black blames SIC.

Overall, according to the report, "the value of the SIC charitable trust's stock market investments stood at £190.4m [at 31 March], a drop of £29.9m from the start of the year, of which £25m was withdrawn and £4.9m lost on the market." Nobody appears likely to carry the can for any of this, so it's business as usual for the blunderers. The only people who seem to have benefited are Ernst & Young, whose fund management fees have risen from £517,000 to £709,000 pa.

● **SKIDROW-ON-SEA's bid to become a "European city of culture" (*Eye* 1052) hits new heights. As part of the promotional drive one of Brighton's most cultured residents, DJ Fatboy Slim, hosted a "rave" at the reopened Dome theatre on 13 April. Alas dancers who went out in search of the scarce lavatories were not able to get back in — with the result that many pissed on the floor and walls of the newly-restored auditorium instead. City of culture, indeed.**

EDUCASHUN NEWZ

THE saga of Nina Ashurst, wife of former Doncaster College principal Terry Ashurst, continues.

Last year Nina lost her job as head of personnel at Doncaster a few months after her husband stepped down as principal. He has taken up the post of acting principal at Stockport College. On 1 May, *she* takes up a new role as clerk to the board of governors at Park Lane College in Leeds. By coincidence the principal of Park Lane is Tony Longworth, who for many years was Terry Ashurst's loyal deputy at Doncaster.

Long-term readers of the *Eye* will recall that in 1991 Terry Ashurst appointed his then mistress Nina Regan as "secretary to the principalship" at Doncaster. Within a few years he had divorced his wife, married Nina, and she became clerk to the governors and head of personnel at the college.

In 1997 Ashurst sacked sociology lecturer and trade union rep John Giddins for refusing to sign a contract that would have made him work longer hours for less money. Giddins was told that if he wished to appeal he could write to the clerk to the governors, er, Nina Ashurst.

In September 1997 Nina was forced to announce her resignation as clerk following investigations by the *Eye* and Radio 4's *Face the Facts* which suggested that she had clearly broken Lord Nolan's recommendations on independence, although she stayed on as head of personnel until last year.

Giddins, whose story was referred to in parliament by John Cryer MP, won his case for unfair dismissal against the college. During his tribunal Nina Ashurst admitted she had never been interviewed for her job and was unqualified for it. She was also forced to confess that she had once told Giddins he was "an obnoxious little man" in a disagreement over car parking facilities and later had to apologise in writing.

Terry stepped down as principal at Doncaster last September and a few months later Nina was also forced to leave after unsuccessfully reapplying for her post under a management restructuring instigated by Terry's successor, Dr George Holmes.

Nina will divide her time between clerk's duties and student discipline matters, an added responsibility which paves the way for further promotion in the future. In her new £30,000-plus per annum post she will no doubt come into contact with the regional branch officer of the lecturers' union NATFHE, who happens to be one John Giddins.

IT'S GRIM UP NORTH LONDON KNIFE & PACKER

WHERE'S QUIN? HE'S BEEN GONE FOR HOURS AND HE ONLY SLIPPED OUT FOR CROISSANTS AND A BAGUETTE
OH I JUST SPOKE TO HIM...
THE EUROSTAR TO PARIS HAS BEEN HELD UP AT ASHFORD
ASHFORD INTERNATIONAL

NOOKS and CORNERS

MY PICTURE shows the interior of the Roman Catholic Friary church of St Mary of the Angels in Fox Street, Liverpool. It dates from 1907-10 and was designed by the firm of Pugin & Pugin — not in their standard Gothic manner but in a round-arched Italian Romanesque style.

It is not, perhaps, a very original piece of architecture; but that is not the point. The church is a repository for treasures. The donor of the church was Amy Imrie, the niece of and heiress to the owner of the White Star Line, who became a nun. She wanted her church modelled on S. Maria d'Ara Coeli in Rome so that it would be "something different from the ordinary run of Gothic churches, which are rather commonplace, and it seemed to me a good plan to have something that might give the people of Liverpool, who cannot go abroad, some... idea of what the churches of Rome are like."

So the interior of St Mary of the Angels has marble columns and marble on the walls together with mosaic decoration brought from Italy; the high altar is a 16th century piece from Bologna Cathedral, the St Francis altar and the communion rails from a church in Rome, the Lady Chapel altar from Naples, the doorways in the aisles from a 17th century Roman palazzo, etc., etc. It is all very splendid and beautiful. And now — need I say? — this church is closed and threatened with demolition and the dispersal of its furnishings.

Patrick Kelly, archbishop of Liverpool, has a problem, it must be said. The number of faithful is declining, no new candidates for the priesthood are coming forward, and he is short of cash — particularly for running the preposterous Metropolitan Cathedral, aka "Paddy's Wigwam".

But that does not excuse the way the archbishop has tackled it – by closing as many churches as possible (11 since 1996, at the last count, and six more city centre churches now proposed for the chop) regardless of architectural quality or, indeed, pastoral need. In March 2001 His Grace turned up at St Mary's to tell a shocked congregation that it would be closed. The last service was held last December and the plan was to clear the site and sell it.

But the archbishop had reckoned without a determined parishioner, Kay Kelly, who has organised protests and fought back against the closure and demolition. The church was little known before — Pevsner missed it, for instance — but now English Heritage has succeeded in getting it listed, grade II, the inspector remarking that "as an architectural ensemble, it is very remarkable... I am not aware of another Roman Catholic church in this country with such a wealth of Italian Baroque carvings and works of art."

When Amy Imrie nobly decided to build in Liverpool, she asked the then archbishop which was the poorest part of the city and was told: Fox Street. Then, as well as building and furnishing her church at great expense, she handsomely endowed it, asking the Franciscan Order, or Friars Minor, to run it. This they did until 1980 when the Jesuits took over and the church was sold to the archdiocese — but not the land on which it stands.

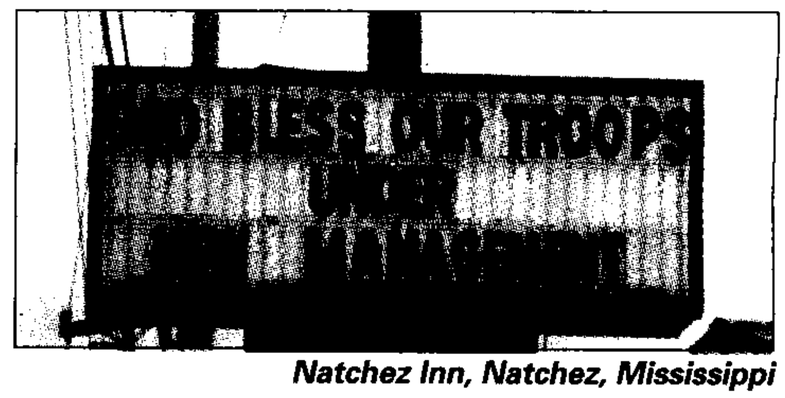
The parishioners, as well as members of Miss Imrie's family, are therefore curious to know about the current legal standing of her gift and endowment today: does it belong to the descendants of the people she wanted to help or to the archdiocese? Oddly enough the archdiocese is rather vague on this matter. When he decided to betray Miss Imrie's trust and close the Friary Church, Archbishop Kelly insisted it was not viable pastorally or financially. True, the area in which it stands has been depopulated through urban redevelopment programmes; but people are likely to come back to the area.

Now that the church is listed along with its superb furnishings, the only sensible thing to do is reopen it as it cannot perform any other use. But the archbishop has said that buildings don't matter; he doesn't much like historic buildings.

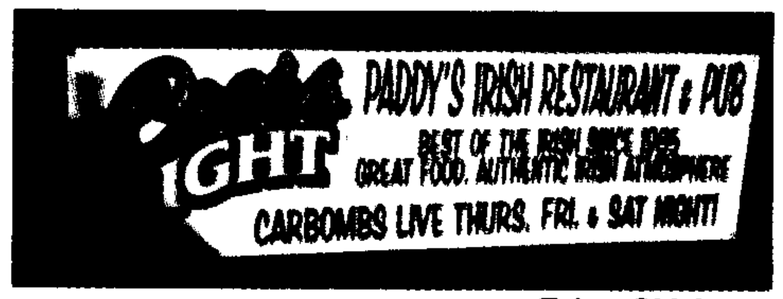
Thanks to the listing, the archdiocese had to apply for permission to remove the furnishing and fittings of the church for "safe-keeping" from vandalism. Without its treasures, of course, St Mary's is of little interest. But we all know what can happen when such artefacts go into store: they can be damaged or, um, go missing. When the same Friars Minor threw in the sponge at St Francis's, Gorton, Manchester, and the church was closed and handed over to a property developer (Eyes passim), a number of important statues went missing and eventually turned up at Sotheby's. Oddly enough, the Bishop of Salford who presided over the closure of this church was the same Patrick Kelly before his translation to Liverpool.

'Piloti'

I-SPY



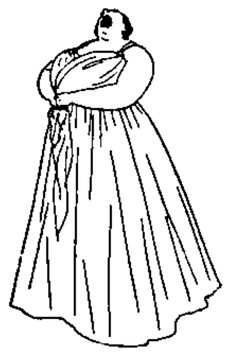
Natchez Inn, Natchez, Mississippi



Tulsa, Oklahoma

Submitted by Michael Knight and Michael Bates. £10 paid for similar submissions. *(SAE required for return of photographs. No transparencies.)*

OPERA NEWS



ALL is not well at English National Opera. On the first night of Donizetti's *Elixir of Love*, Alison Roddy, playing Adina, was stricken by a mysterious virus which deprived her of her voice.

This was just weeks after soprano Kathleen Broderick "dried" during *The Valkyrie* (*Eye* 1049), on which occasion the performance was cut short. This time, though, the show had to go on... and an ingenious solution was found. Roddy was deemed fit enough to go on stage but not to sing. So she went out and lip-synched... as her understudy Louise Walsh sang the part from behind a music stand in the wings!

ENO has been trying to camouflage a sorry succession of artistic failures of late with an even sorrier pretence of being "controversial" (the excuse the company gave for the toilet cubicles and male rape inserted into Verdi's *Masked Ball*) and the odd spot of sheer deceit (like advertising its floperoo *La Vestale* with a photo-image of the great Maria Callas when the star is actually the rather larger Jane Eaglen – henceforth to be known as "la donna immobile").

But ENO hit the bottom-line of taste in its recent staging of Bach's *St John Passion*. At face value the production was one of the company's better efforts – save for one embarrassing post-Crucifixion scene where the chorus covers the stage with cellophane-wrapped bunches of flowers in the manner of the masses after the death of Princess Diana.

What the audience didn't know, however, was that the flowers were originally plastic and reusable; but director Deborah Warner changed her mind and said she wanted something more resonant of mourning. So the company phoned a crematorium, hatched a deal and, unbeknown to the bereaved, started sending round a van to pick up each day's floral tributes to become the next night's theatre props.

Thank Heavens the recent ENO *Valkyrie* was only semi-staged: it doesn't do to think where they'd have got the corpses of slain heroes for Act III.

'Lunchtime O'Boulez'

YOUNG BRITISH ARTISTS

BY BIRCH

JUST FANCY THAT!

"Services between Newcastle and Berwick-Upon-Tweed have been replaced by trains because of track improvements and maintenance work"

— BBC Ceefax P432 Sat 13 Apr 16.05
Great North Eastern Trains

Letters

Spitting feuer

Sir,

As a faithful reader of the Victor comic for boys for most of the 1960s, and therefore fluent in WWII Kraut-speak, I feel duty-bound to point out that the otherwise amusing caption accompanying the photograph of Princess Michael of Kent in Eye 1052 was completely spoilt by a grave error of spelling.

Any Dummkopf will tell you that your rendition, 'Achtung! Spitführ!' should actually have been spelt 'Achtung! SpitFEUER!' Donner und Blitzen! Your version is not even phonetically correct. Some Englander Schweinhund in your midst is obviously confusing Feuer und Führer.

Gott in Himmel! Don't you know anything? You must haf been wasting your time reading Bunty, Fabulous 208 or some other similarly girlisch publications while the rest of us chaps were getting a useful education courtesy of DC Thompson of Dundee.

Her late Majesty must be rolling in her grave, Gawd bless 'er. Cor! Lumme! I would never have ruddy-well believed it if I hadn't seen it with me own mince pies! You'll be mis-spelling Luftwaffe and Blitzkrieg next if you're not careful.

Have you no respect for our partners in Europe, the Jerries, Squareheads and Huns?

Yours, shocked,
PAUL BLEZARD,

Hampton.

Sharon brought to book

Sir,

Do you actually edit your organ before it goes to press? In your 5th to 18th April edition, the article The Book of Sharon became out of date by a week by excluding any mention of the suicide bomber who massacred innocent families celebrating the Seder Service in Netanya.

Maybe a verse 13 should have been added to this epistle, which would have read: "And Ara-fat sent a messenger of death to the tents of the Israeli and smiteth them as they celebrated their feast of Peace-over and killed and maimed innocent people, even as he smiteth innocent Israelis in the Disco and in their Pizza Parlours, and in their shopping malls. And Ara-fat rejoiced and said, 'Whatever I do I will always have the support of the left wing liberals, even unto the Great Lord Gnome, who judges everything.' And so it came to pass that it was written in Lord Gnome's Organ, with its usual bias, and Lord Gnome said it was good."

HAZEL KAY,

Via email.

Gordian knot

Sir,

Your diatribe against Big Gordy's tax credits for firms doing R and D is simply wrong. If Britain is to survive to the end of the 21st century, we need to do more than rely on barrow boy asset strippers and public school educated money shufflers in the city. That means doing as much R and D as our competitors do – about twice as much as we do at present. And that means offering all companies doing R and D the size of tax breaks for this kind of investment as our competitors in Yerp and the US do.

PROFESSOR MICHAEL J RENNIE,
PhD FRSE,

University of Dundee.

Van slaughter

Sir,

At the risk of finding myself shunned by the public, for daring to stick up for a van driver, I must correct a few glaring errors in the letter from Leslie Thomson (1051).

The speed limit on the road John Fletcher was driving down was the national speed limit – ie, 60mph. So he probably wasn't speeding.

A single course brick wall is not very strong at all – you can quite easily knock one down by reversing into one at walking pace – a proper steel crash barrier should have been erected, or at the very least some road markings of some description (there were none).

John Fletcher was driving a Mercedes Sprinter, not a Ford Transit.

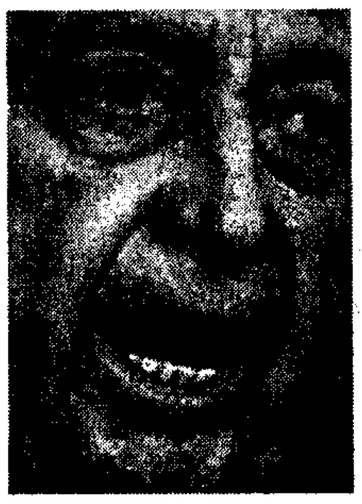
Obviously the old adage of not speaking ill of the dead is, er, dead.

Best regards,
JOHN HAYES,

Cardiff.

Lookalike

Sharon



Davros

Sir,

Surely I cannot be the first to remark on the uncanny resemblance between Mr Ariel Sharon and Davros, the evil commander of the Daleks from the BBC's "Dr Who"?

AL H.,

Via email.

Modern classic?

Sir,

I note from Ma'amballs (1052) that Brighton IT consultancy Praggers quote from a "traditional" Scottish song, "Hearts of Olden Glory".

Praggers definition of "traditional" seems to be skew-whiff, as the song, written by Calum and Rory Macdonald of Scottish band Runrig, dates back hundreds of years to, er, 1987, when it appeared on Runrig's album "The Cutter And The Clan". Perhaps in the IT business something as ancient as 15 years old could be described as "traditional".

Anyway, I'm sure that, in among the wailing and gnashing of teeth, the good people at Praggers, who obviously pride themselves on attention to detail, sought and obtained permission of the copyright holders to reproduce the lyric on their website. Ahem.

Yours sincerely,
COLIN CUBIE,

Hove.

16.03 Train Delayed

15:55 Southend Central to London Fenchurch Street due 17:15

This train has been delayed at Southend Central and is now 6 min late.

This is due to Police putting yobs on train.

C2C Rail Website

Scenes You Seldom See (9)

"I won't bother you now – you're obviously on your way to work"

Bearded

Sir,

Your fine organ has such a reputation for accuracy that I feel obliged to point it in the right direction. Last issue's piece on "Losing My Virginity" obviously contained a few typos, such as the word "remaindered", which surely should have read "reprinted", since the book sold over 500,000 copies and is being updated due to demand not "vanity".

Similarly, later on in the story, you asked "Beardy" to be honest but then make even more typos about the organs of his empire. Your description of V2 Records is "floundering", surely it can't be the same company that had Britain's biggest selling album of 2001, will make a profit in 2002 and was just valued by over £200 million in a debt for equity swap deal. Nor can you be describing the same Virgin Retail, but rather than being "sold" was actually bought from W.H. Smith! Nor surely can a "panic" loan also be a long-term facility with Lloyds Bank which has existed for several years.

Finally, you asked why "Beardy" failed to win the Lottery? Obviously because that was the only way to give Camelot the chance to screw it up twice rather than just once!

Yours sincerely,
WILL WHITEHORN,

Director of the Virgin Group.

Tittle-tattle of Hastings

Sir,

Re: Issue 1051, Rotten Boroughs. Sad to see your correspondent's inability to distinguish Hastings Borough Council, lucky recipients of £400m in EU money, and East Sussex County Council who have withdrawn funding for their music libraries!

Sadder still to see the Eye repeat the same old tired tabloidesque clichés about Hastings as drugs, unemployment and single parent capital of the South Coast. You must get out more – preferably south of Battle!

Yours sincerely,
DUNCAN HAWKINS,
(Eye reader for 20 years and disappointed)

Hastings.

Censor sensitivity

Sir,

Thank you for sending my copy of Private Eye number 1049. I'm not sure what you have done to upset the Saudis; they have torn out pages 5 and 6 from this issue. Whatever it was, please keep doing it.

Regards,
KEVIN JAMES BELL,

Via e-mail.

Ripe for Reform

Sir,

The reason we at the Reform Club didn't adopt the Eye's entirely sensible suggestion of kicking out our own Eva Braun – aka Michele Renouf – is that we'd then really have to kick out everyone else with barmy opinions – there wouldn't have been many members left.

Do get l'affaire Irving in perspective. There were barely half a dozen members complaining to our very craven Committee which promptly took the brave decision to cave in. It all came up again at the AGM where rather more members found it outrageous that a Club with a fine liberal tradition should bar someone purely for the views he holds. 'Twas not ever thus – we've had that Enoch Powell address us within living memory.

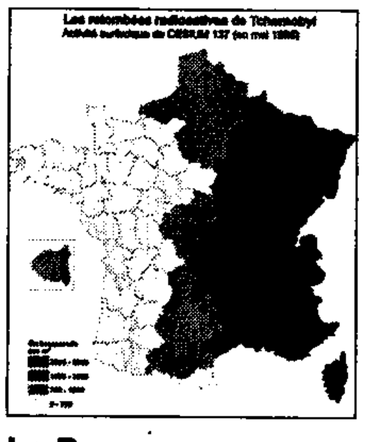
Meanwhile, we're all waiting for the Committee to announce that the anniversary of The Ban will be celebrated by a Book Burning of works by Irving in the Smoking Room fireplace.

Roll on 1934.

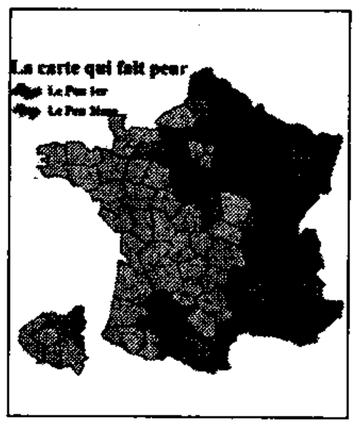
OLD BUFFER,

Reform Club, London SW1.

Lookalike



Le Pen



Contagion

Sir,

Has anyone noticed the remarkable similarity between the map of France showing the political complexion of the country after Jean-Marie Le Pen's triumph in the first round of the presidential elections... and that showing the contagion that infected large areas after the Chernobyl disaster? Are they in any way related?

Yours,

ANDREW BULLOCK,

Via email.

Fair cops

Sir,

I read your Police 5 piece in Eye 1052 in which you express concern at the number of cops who decline to supply their DNA for "elimination purposes", a euphemism if ever I heard one! The truth of the matter must be well know to the journalists of Private Eye given the number of campaigns they have waged against the incompetent and often underhand way internal investigations are conducted by police forces in the UK.

The simple truth for all to see is the rank and file of Britain's police do not trust their masters in matters of internal discipline and having seen the system in action over 30 years in the job, I venture that mistrust is well founded.

If an independent complaints authority could be established for the police, giving an equally fair deal for both police and public, the ordinary coppers who are the subject of the bulk of complaints would be the first to sign up for it. However, since such an authority would be unlikely to offer police staffs such essential rights as freedom to sue malicious complainants, full representation and a right to a hearing under circumstances more fair than the kangaroo courts currently operated under the present discipline system, we are still some way from a solution.

JIM BRADLEY,

Selkirk.

Just Expressing ourselves

Sir,

I know you have opinions about the present management at the Express group. Your comments about Vikki Holloway were a cheap shot though, she's actually very bright and funny, not the blonde bimbo that your article implies. If she is also rather outrageous I do not see how present company can complain about that.

There is no shortage of thoroughly deserving targets for the Eye so even if I had a subscription, I wouldn't cancel it.

Yours,

STAN BEST,

Via e-mail.

Local news for local people

Sir,

Re: Media news (1050).

Cat rides bicycle in London = national news.

Cat owns bicycle factory in Wolverhampton = filler at the end of the regional slot, just after the skateboarding duck.

Keep up the work anyway!

S.A. HEYWOOD,

Via e-mail.

Shelf life

Sir,

As a regular (female) reader, I have a gripe I wish to get off my chest.

Why is it when I go into my local WH Smiths to buy my Private Eye, it's always in the "Men & Style" section, on the top shelf in among the (ahem)... Blokes Mucky Mags!

Regards,

JANE POTTER,

Dover, Kent.

Colemanballs

£10 paid for contributions

"Religion used to be the opium of the people. Now we're looking to drugs as being the opium."
BISHOP JIM THOMPSON, Radio Four
(Tracey Szwagrzak)

"I'm a bit of a stickler for comprehendability."
JUSTIN CURRIE (of Del Amitri), BBC Radio Scotland
(Dougie Paton)

"He's the type of player the manager's either going to keep or not keep next season."
ALVIN MARTIN, Talk Sport Radio
(Philip Todd)

"Riding that tackle, he wiggled his hips like a daisy in the wind."
Commentator, Radio Five Live
(Dave Holton)

THE PEDANTS' REVOLT

Warrant office

Sir,

As any soldier (fule?) kno Mr Perry Mason is a Warrant Officer One (Garrison Sergeant Major) and therefore a God, not a Brigadier (who just gets paid more).

WARRANT OFFICER TWO (Not quite a God) HELEN CARTER,

Bristol.

Fly remarks

Sir,

So "Southend Airport is not even a century old". (Eye 1051) Thanks for that Piloti; it was most interesting. Perhaps you could tell me how many airports do in fact pre-date the Wright brothers first flight?

Over and Out,

DAVID PAXTON,

Wokingham.

Silly burgers?

Sir,

If a graduate has a choice of working in a burger bar for £17,000 a year, or a local newspaper for £11,000 a year (Eye 1051), then surely that graduate is a cretin if he opts for local newspapers. Thus it follows that any union of such people, like the NUJ for example, is a union of cretins, surely? I myself signed up for a local newspaper at £9,000 a year after graduating in 1997. When I was sacked on Christmas Eve 1998 for persistently complaining about my wage the union of cretins did nothing. So I got a job at the News of the World instead. Now I work quite happily for Coca-Cola Enterprises with no complaints at all. Perhaps one day the journalists in the NUJ will learn that they will be a lot happier if they either a) Give up journalism or b) Leave the NUJ. Sadly, this is never suggested to them by NUJ leaders, who earn twice as much as burger fryers for relieving the hacks of their money.

Yours sincerely,

A. GERMAINE,

Via email.

HOM SAP

AUSTIN

SEE THE LONE MAN FACE TO FACE WITH..
WILD BEAST SHOW
.. THE HIDEOUS PREDATOR. LADIES AND GENTLEMEN..
WILD BEAST SHOW
THE ARACHNOPHOBE!

Letter from **India**

from Our Own Correspondent

AFTER eight weeks of violence, and the death toll nudging 1,000, there are few signs of an end to the pogroms of Muslims in the western state of Gujarat, ruled by the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata party (BJP).

Almost daily, rioting Hindu mobs hurl acid-filled light bulbs and crudely fashioned bombs at Muslim neighbourhoods in Ahmedabad, the state's largest city. The police either do nothing or connive with those inciting trouble, leaving the army, which for the moment remains non-partisan, to patrol the streets and prevent a total collapse of law and order.

A curfew continues in several other towns where, since 28 February, rampaging Hindu mobs have set Muslims alight, burnt their homes and looted their businesses. Tens of thousands of Muslims continue to live in cramped refugee camps too terrified to return home for fear of being attacked again.

The attacks began after a Muslim mob set fire to a train carrying extremist Hindus back from the northern town of Ayodhya. Nearly 60 people were burnt alive. The extremists have been leading a campaign to build a temple in the town to the warrior god Lord Ram on the site of a 16th century mosque they demolished a decade ago. That incident provoked communal clashes across the country in which more than 2,000 people died.

The state authorities led by chief minister Narendra Modi seem to have a laissez-faire attitude to the current blood-letting. This is causing concern even among allies of the BJP-led federal coalition in Delhi who fear it is fuelling intolerance in a country with a secular tradition of government that leaders proudly contrast with what they regard as fundamentalist Pakistan. Muslims make up around 12 percent of India's population of more than one billion and Hindus some 82 percent.

The National Human Rights Commission says it does not believe Mr Modi's explanation of why the violence is taking place, nor why he had failed to prosecute those involved. But the chief minister is unrepentant. He offered families of Muslims killed in the riots only half the Rs200,000 – around £3,000 – authorised by the state as compensation for the 58 Hindus killed in the February train attack. And it was left to an embarrassed federal government to announce that it would make up the shortfall.

Atal Behari Vajpayee, our prime minister, has steadfastly refused to sack Modi, however. Instead he and senior BJP colleagues have praised the chief minister's record in "containing" the troubles. Indeed, Vajpayee himself has been sharpening his rhetoric, accusing Muslims of fuelling sectarian unrest. "Muslims don't want to live in harmony," he said at a public rally in April. "They [Muslims] don't mix with the society and are not interested in living in peace."

As if this were not enough, the World Hindu Council, closely aligned to the BJP, has talked of a "final settlement" of the Muslim problem. "Now is the time for direct action to assert the Hindu identity – in word and deed," according to Pravin Togadiya, the council's international general-secretary and a cancer surgeon of repute. "The Muslims have to be taught a lesson."

Another council leader has asked the country's Muslims to stop eating beef as a "precondition" for peaceful coexistence with the majority community. "There are so many other animals to eat. Why should they insist on slaughtering and eating cows, which are revered by Hindus?" said Giriraj Kishore.

Some MPs say Mr Vajpayee cannot act against the Gujarat chief minister even if he wanted to, as both belong to the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) or National Volunteer Corps, which provides "spiritual guidance" to the BJP. The founding principle of the 77-year-old RSS, an organisation likened to Italy's Fascist Party, is to defend Hinduism by keeping it "pure" from outside influences like Islam and Christianity.

FUNNY OLD WORLD

COMPILED BY **VICTOR LEWIS-SMITH**

● "Threats at gunpoint are not rare," Jean-François Verdier told a press conference at the Ministry of Transport in Paris, "and other attacks have included physical assault, damaged vehicles, arson and threats of rape and murder. Candidates who have failed their driving test before sometimes arrange for their friends to meet them at the end of the exam, so they can all attack the examiners and their cars together if they fail again. That's why we've decided to introduce a twenty-four-hour cooling-off period for all learner drivers, before they find out whether or not they've passed their test."

Verdier, a transport ministry official, was speaking about a driving test system that was introduced in parts of France last year, and may soon become nationwide policy. "Attacks on examiners are common here, because most candidates fail their driving test first time. It's not unusual for them to take it eight or ten times before they pass, and many French people don't like it when the authorities keep frustrating their ambitions. But in those parts of the country where the candidates are not informed of the result until the next day, the number of assaults has greatly decreased. That's why we're thinking of extending that policy throughout France, although quite a lot of our examiners say that they're still being threatened and attacked, even after the cooling-off period has ended." *(Reuters, 16/4/02. Spotter: Douglas Ball)*

— ● —

● "Ho-ho yoga was invented by Dr Madan Kataria," Vijay Singh explained to students at a Los Angeles workshop, "a genius who is known in Bombay as 'the Guru of Giggling'. Unlike conventional laughter, which is inspired by bad puns and human misery, our therapeutic laughter is thought-free, and is based on ancient techniques. And if you enrol on one of our courses, you will learn Dr Kataria's secret teachings about the effects of laughter on human physiology, and will literally laugh your way to health.

"So far, 225 certified laughter leaders have been trained in the United States and Canada," he continued, "and they now direct hundreds of groups across North America. There are more than a dozen different techniques to learn, and these include:

● Lion laughter, where people pounce at each other, grunting loudly, wagging their tongues, and pawing the air with imaginary claws:

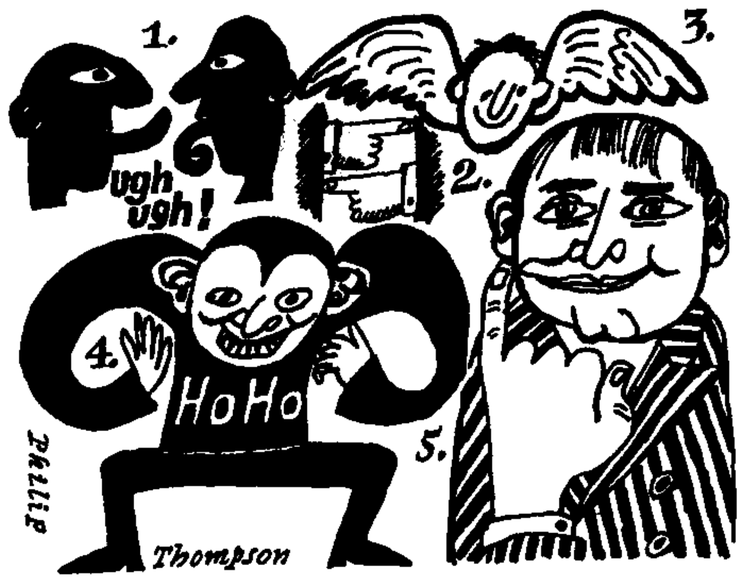
● Chicken-skip laughter, where everyone breaks into titters, moving their upper arms sideways like flapping wings;

● Monkey laughter, where they place the feet wide apart, bend forward, and laugh while scratching the underarms;

● Pillsbury Dough Boy laughter, where there is mutual poking of stomachs; and

● Austin Powers laughter, where people imitate the snicker of Dr Evil, with their pinkie placed alongside their mouth.

"Daily practice of Ho-ho yoga techniques is guaranteed to keep you free from colds, coughs,



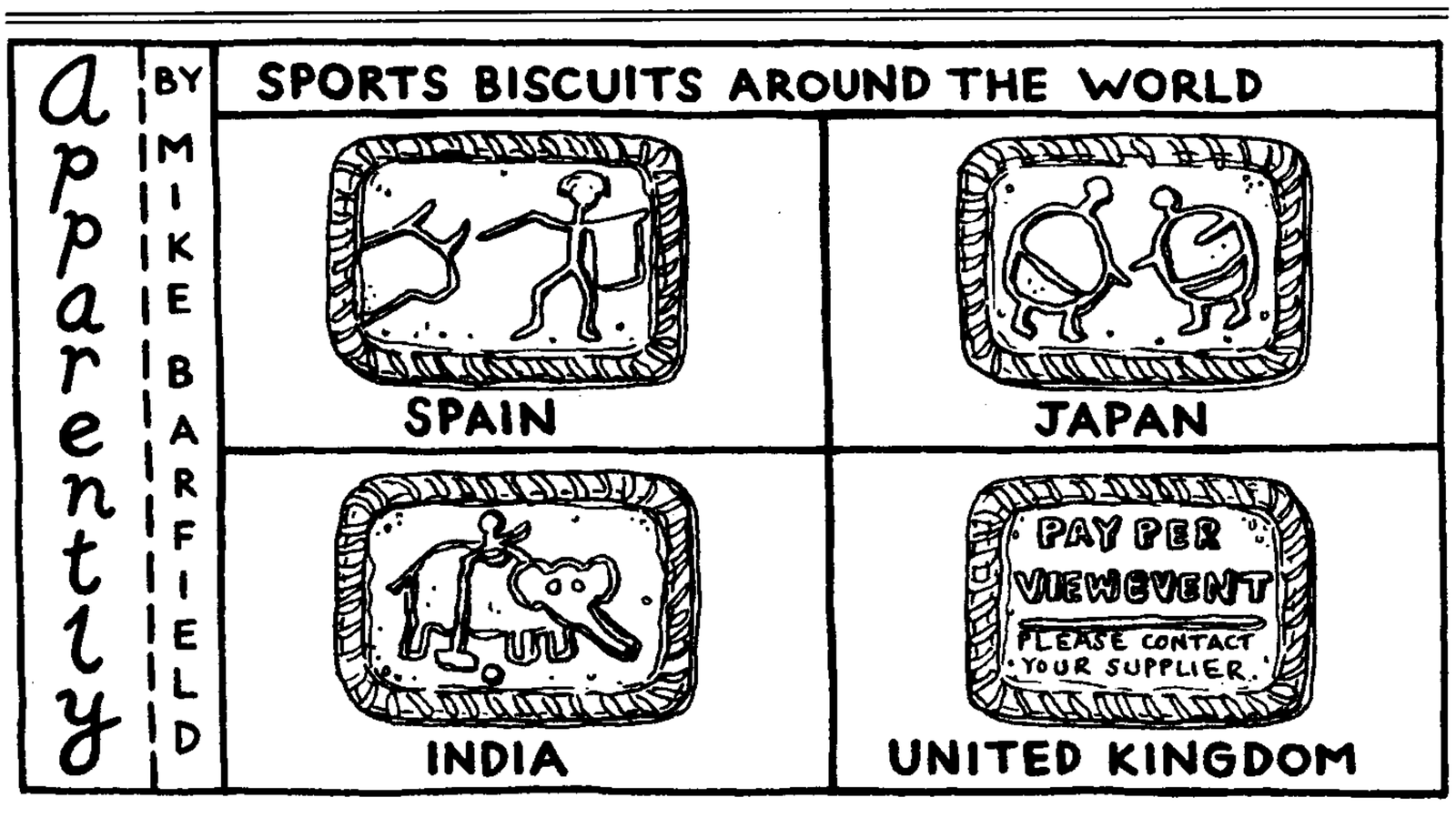
and stress. And if you fall ill during the course, all fees will be refunded." *(San Francisco Chronicle, 27/3/02. Spotter: Wallace Brown)*

— ● —

● *"The problem with the south dressing room is caused by the media," Feng Shui expert Paul Darby told reporters after an inspection of the Millennium Stadium in Cardiff, "because all the cables and lights from the press interview room are affecting its energy flow. There is also too much negative energy in the south stand, so if you will now excuse me, I shall take measures to zing up the energy level, ahead of the Cambridge versus Blackpool match."*

Mr Darby had been called in by the owners of the Millennium Stadium after complaints that, in all eight football finals played there since its opening, whichever team occupies the south dressing room invariably loses. "With the help of a Tibetan bell, handfuls of sea salt, and incense sticks, I have been able to improve the dressing room flow," he explained later. "But the south stand is trickier, because it has a railway line and a station behind it, not to mention the Bristol Channel, and those are things which I cannot move. To counteract the static energy that's trapped there, I would therefore ask the Cambridge fans to wear bright colours such as reds and purples, and to chant very loudly as well."

Cambridge later occupied the south dressing room for the final of the LDV Vans Trophy, and lost 4-1. (BBC website, 25/3/02. Spotter: Stuart Herridge)



ST ALBION PARISH NEWS

Incumbent: Rev. A.R.P. Blair MA (Oxon)

Hullo,

And I'm getting more than a little impatient with all those parishioners who keep on moaning to me about our so-called "crime wave", and how they are too terrified to come out of their homes at night.

I even had one old lady come up to me the other day, saying that she didn't dare to come to church any more because she was worried that she would be gunned down in a drive-by shooting of the type she'd been reading about in her Daily Mail!

Well, goodness me, let's get this in perspective, shall we?

Yes, there are isolated examples of crime in St Albion's, and people are rightly worried about it.

But, hey, there's nothing to worry about because I've already got it at the very top of our parish agenda (just below our local hospital and the need to recruit some teachers for the St Albion's Primary School).

Mr Blunkett of our Neighbourhood Watch has already set up a committee, with me as chairman, to take a pro-active look at the whole question of crime in modern society.

We will be asking all the key questions, such as:

1. What is crime?
2. What are the causes of crime?
3. How can we stamp it out?
4. Shall we have the coffee and biscuits now or after the meeting?

One very good idea that has come up from someone speaking off the top of their head (it was me, actually, now you ask) would be to stop handing out benefits to poor parents whose children steal money because they are poor. Think about it! Hey, it makes a lot of sense. This is the best idea since my idea of marching yobs to the cash machine and fining them on the spot.

Anyway, I give you my solemn pledge that, by September, all crime will have been eradicated from the streets of St Albion's.

Just picture the scene: children playing hop-scotch on the village green, with no fear of being mugged for their mobile phones, old ladies cycling happily to Communion through the morning mist, with their warm beer and their fish and chips and no fear of being car-jacked.

Our friend from Tesco will tell you that this is all just a dream.

But, no, it is reality. Come September you will see for yourselves just how different things have become!

Then the cynics will have to eat their

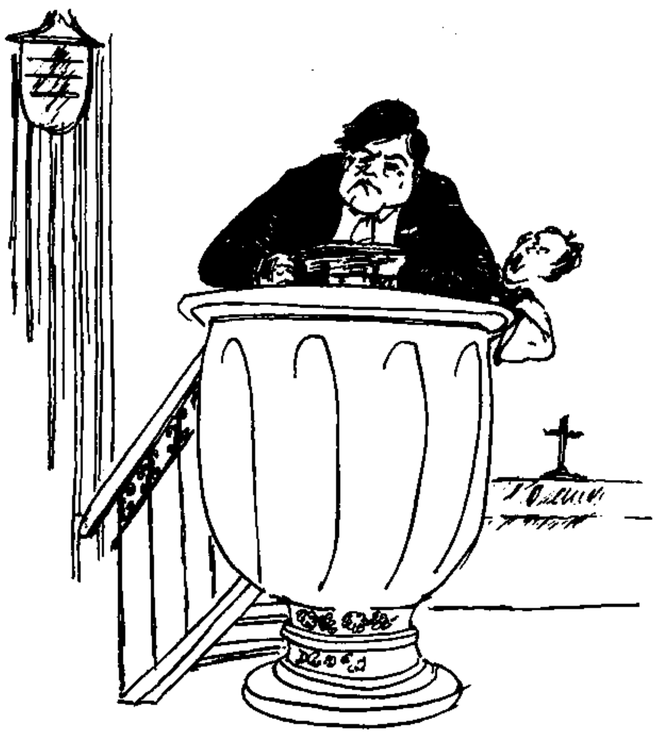
words, and realise that I am right and they are totally wrong.

To them I say, in the words of the Good Book, "O ye of little England..." *(Gospel according to Saint Look, Ch.14, v.3).*

Yours, Tony

Our Treasurer's Annual Report

Unfortunately, there is no space to include Mr Brown's latest effort but I was most amused by this picture of Gordon by local artist Mr de la Nougerede! T.B.



To Remember In Your Prayers

■ Sadly, our prayers for Mrs Mowlam do not seem to have been answered, so we'll all have to pray even harder for Mo to be given the blessed gift of being struck dumb, so bringing home to her the wickedness of her ways in pursuing a vendetta against the Vicar, just because at one time it was said that Mo was more popular in the parish than me (which is, frankly, ridiculous!). Let us pray that she is wise enough to spend the "thirty pieces of silver" she received from the St Albion's Advertiser on some good psychiatric help and not on the drink which is, sadly, more likely! T.B.

A Message From The Editor, Mr Campbell

On behalf of the Vicar, I would like to make it perfectly clear that he did not in any way try to "take over" the recent funeral of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth The Queen Mother. Had he so wished, it would have been entirely appropriate for the Vicar to conduct the entire service himself, making the address and reading all the lessons, in addition to conducting the choir and playing the organ. In fact, the Palace were very keen for the Vicar to take on the job of Queen Mother, after her sad death, but with his customary humility he suggested that the post should remain vacant for a few years, as a mark of respect to her late Majesty. Anyone who is caught making any suggestions to the contrary will be reported to the PCC (Press Complaints Commission).

A.C.

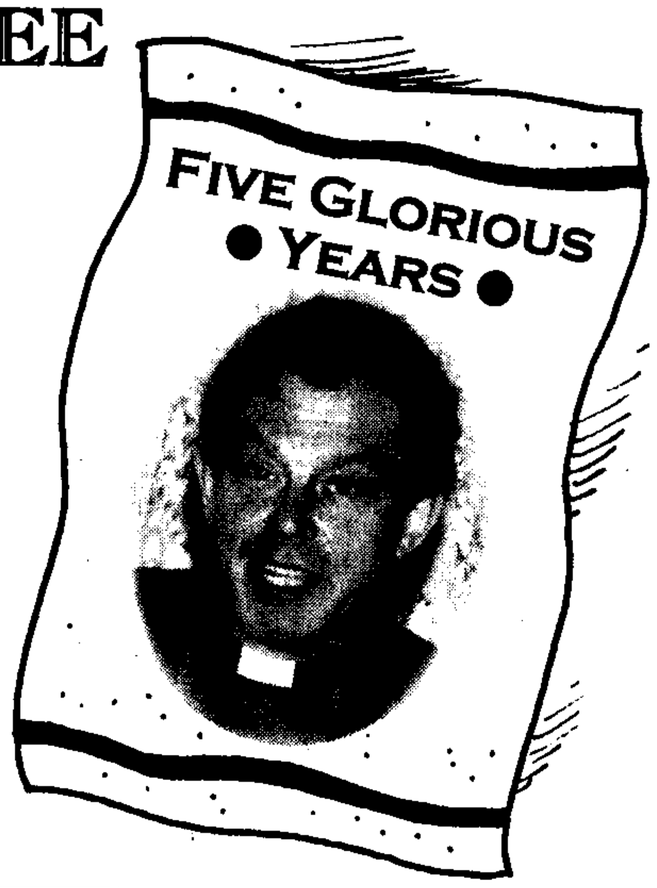
THE GOLDEN JUBILEE

There will be a number of events in the parish to celebrate this important anniversary next week. It is exactly five years since Tony was enthroned and I am sure that many of you will want to mark the occasion with street parties, a parade and a special service of thanksgiving to replace Sunday's normal family worship.

All of you will agree that in a changing world, Tony represents an important symbol of stability and continuity. He remains someone to look up to in today's uncertain (though much better than it was in the old days) society.

There will be a commemorative tea towel with a charming portrait of the vicar on it for those who wish to purchase a quality souvenir of the events.

Please send £50,000 to Lord Levy, c/o the vicarage, for a set of one.



DAMILOLA CASE: GUILTY WALK FREE

by Our Man In Court **JOSHUA ROZENBEARD**

A SMILING Inspector K. (his name cannot be revealed for legal reasons) walked from court a free man yesterday after the judge had found him guilty of "incompetence on a massive scale".

Inspector K. is well-known in the area as the leader of a gang called The Metropolitan who do not roam the streets and who locals blame for a climate of lawlessness and terror.

Said one resident, "Everyone round here doesn't know them. We never see them. No wonder people are frightened to go out when people like Inspector K. are nowhere to be seen."

On a BBC interview, the Inspector, whose voice had been electronically altered to protect his identity said, "My mobile phone records show that I was nowhere near the scene of the crime. At the time I was playing "snake" in the station canteen for over three hours. I am innocent of these charges. Okay, I may have arrested a few people for not wearing a seat-belt but I would never do anything serious like catch a murderer."

ON OTHER PAGES

What kind of society allows the Daily Mail to be published every day? by **Melanie Phillips**

The Day I Met The Queen

by **Johnny Freedland** (Age 7)

ONE day I was invited to go to Windsor Castle and meet the Queen! Gosh, fancy me, the world's leading Republican and top Guardian thinker meeting a real live Monarch! Phew!

Windsor Castle is jolly big and there were lots of people there but even so the Queen stopped and spoke to me. She was very nice but was not wearing a crown like she does on the banknotes.

"Hello," she said, smiling, but I was determined to stick to my principles as the world's leading Republican and top Guardian thinker, so I refused to curtsey and call her "Ma'am".

Instead, I fell to my knees and called her "Your Gracious Majesty".

All in all, it was a lovely day and one I shall remember for the rest of my life. God Save The Queen!

© *Rubbisher and Moron Publications.*

"The lawyers are having a field day"

POETRY CORNER

In Memoriam Baron Hans Thyssen Bornemisza de Kaszon, Art Collector, Ruth Handler, Creator of the Barbie Doll, and General Alexander Lebed, Russian war hero.

So. Farewell
Then
All three
Of you.

It is true
What they say –
People always
Die in threes.

You remember Inspector
Morse, Van der Valk and
The Z-Cars man.*

Or, more recently,
Spike Milligan, Barry Took
And Dudley Moore.

But, strangely,
You three had
Nothing in common.
E.J. Thribb (17½)

* *The Editor writes:* Due to lack of space it was not possible to include Mr Thribb's verbal renditions of the relevant theme tunes – e.g. Z-Cars (Da-da-da-di-dum-dum-dum-dum-dum), Inspector Morse (Dit-dit-dit-da-dot-dot-dot) and Van der Valk (Da-da-da-da-da-da-da-da-da etc). We apologise for any disappointment to our readers.

Un Taxi Driver Ecrit

Chaque semaine, un well-known chauffeur de taxi écrit sur un important issue de nos jours.

CETTE SEMAINE: "L'Election Français" par **Jean-Marie le Cabbie** (numéro 732487).

Sacre bleu, gouveneur! Cet Le Pen, eh? Tout le monde are knocking him, mais il a un point, n'est-ce pas? Je veux dire, les asylum seekers, par example, sponging off notre economie! La guillotine est trop bonne pour eux!! C'est la seule langue ils comprendent!

J'ai eu cette Barbara Amiel dans la derrière de mon taxi une fois! Quelle scorcheur n'est-ce pas? Et un very clever woman.

SEMAINE PROCHAINE: Simone Heffeur (no. 63742) on "Pourquoi Enoch avait raison".

'Luvvies Labour Lost' to close

by **Joshua Rosencrantzandguildenstern**

THERE were tears and cheers last night at the RSC, as the long-running tragi-comedy "Luvvies Labour Lost" came to an end.

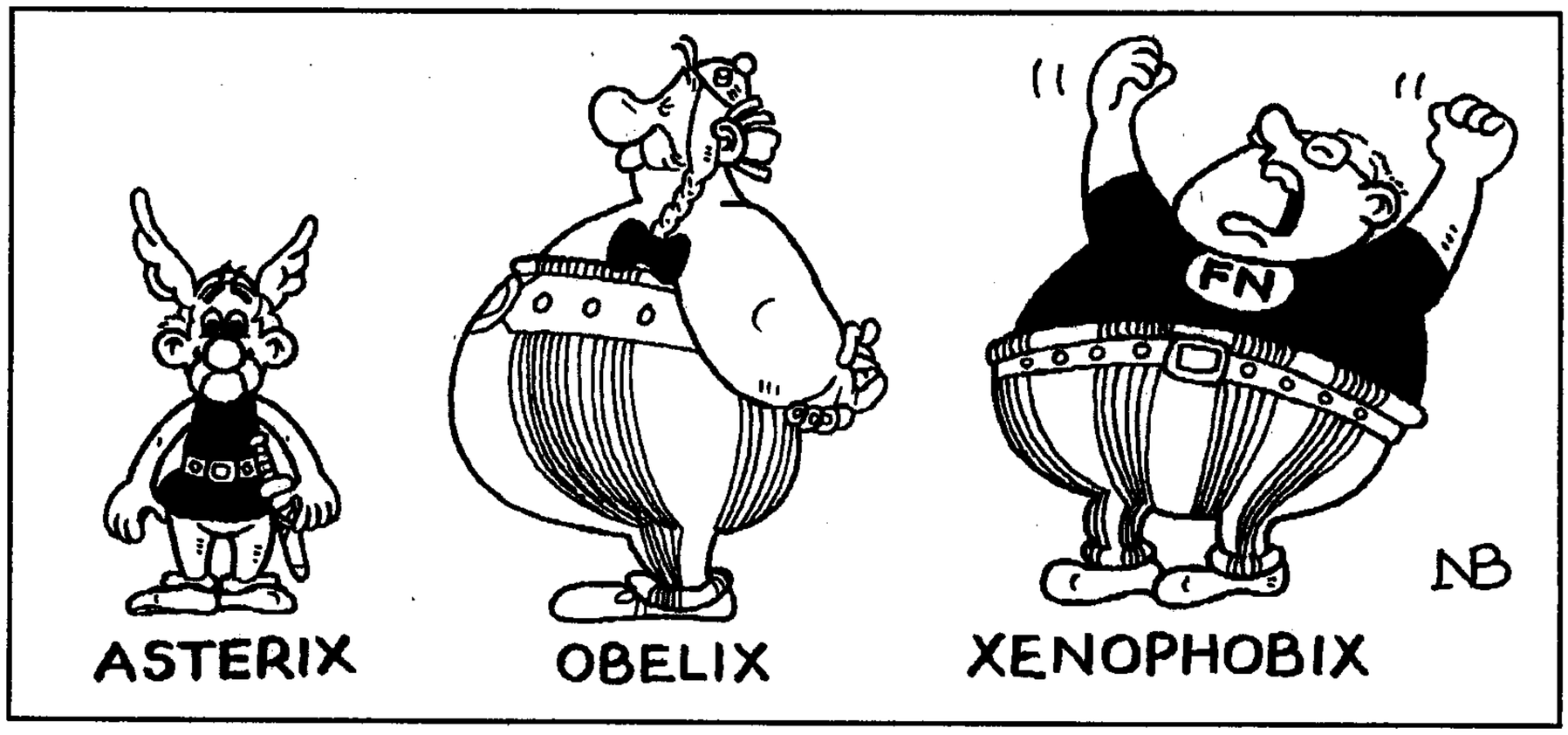
As Dame Judi Dench, magnificent in the role of lead murderer, dramatically plunged the dagger into the back of Adrian Noble (a rather weak performance by the director himself), the audience burst out into spontaneous applause.

As Noble cried, "Et tu, Judi?" before collapsing onto a pile of money, Dame Judi gave her final speech.

"I come not to praise Adrian, although he is a sweetie, but to bury him darlings because, well, honestly..."

Don't Miss

● "City City Bank Bank" – new musical about a director who discovers a magic vehicle for making money and puts all the cheques into his deposit account.



WHAT YOU MISSED

EXCLUSIVE TO ALL TV CHANNELS

(Horst Wessel Song over shots of Nuremberg Rally)

Presenter, J. Paxman *(for it is he)*: The French have just elected their first Nazi President. But could it happen here? The chilling answer is – it already has. Here is our special report from Britain's racist front-line, Neasden-under-Lyme.

(Shot of solitary pimply youth in anorak standing in shopping precinct trying to hand out BNP leaflets to bored shoppers)

Voice-over: In last May's council elections, the BNP won a frightening 0.8 percent of the vote here in Neasden-under-Lyme.

This means, following the rise to power of far-right groups all over Europe, it could be as high as 105 percent. And that's excluding such factors as September 11, the Middle East crisis, the collapse of ITV Digital and the searing new question mark over the availability of David Beckham for the World Cup. That is why the voters are now in their millions signing up to the gospel of hatred peddled by the extreme right.

Surely it is only a matter of time before the cobbled streets of this sleepy Midlands seaside town echo to the grim tramp of jack-boots. This is George Origami returning you to the studio.

(Cut to presenter with three men in suits)

Paxperson: I am joined by three men in suits representing all shades of mainstream political opinion. Gentlemen, democracy is under threat as it has not been since the dark days of 1940. How should we react? Should the allies invade France and restore democracy by force, if necessary putting Osama Le Pen on trial for war crimes?

First Man In Suit: I think we're all agreed on that.

Paxperson: I'm sorry, I'll have to interrupt you there because we've run out of time. Goodnight, and let's hope that you don't get a knock on the door from the Fascists in the middle of it!

(Credits Roll)

TV Highlights

The Forsyth Saga

ITV's bodice-ripping period drama tonight reaches its climax when old "Freddie" Forsyth can contain himself no longer. He launches a foul-mouthed and unprovoked assault on the innocent Euro (many viewers may find this scene offensive) for which he faces social ignominy.

He is sacked by the BBC and retires, a broken man, to live out his days on his Hertfordshire estate alone with a huge pile of money.

Eye Rating: Don't Miss

Father Ped (UK Gold)

CLASSIC last episode in which Father Ped is excommunicated by the Pope for "sins against humanity".

CAST IN FULL

Father Ped . . . . . P.D. O'Phile
The Pope . . . . . Marlon Brando
Man in prison . . . . Lord Archer

Next week: *Auf Wiedersehen, Ped*

Eye Rating: Urgh....

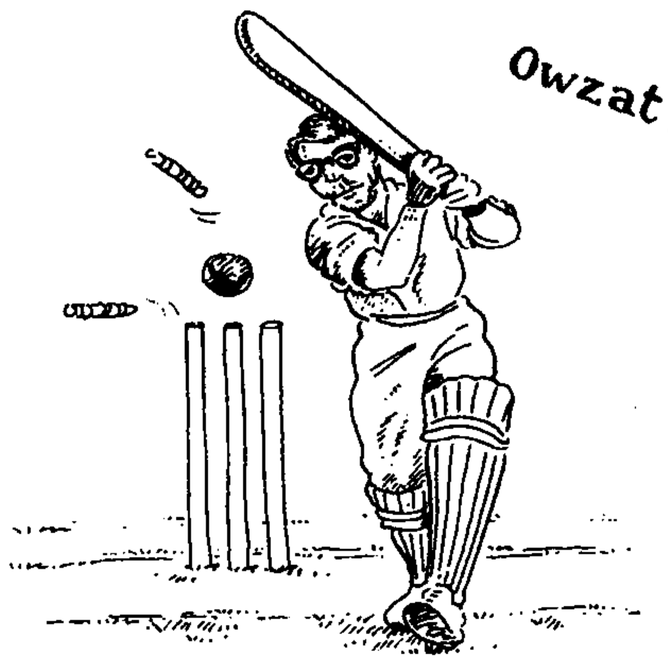
Soap Update WestEnders

IT's the question the whole nation is asking. Is little Mo guilty? Did she really hit Tony with a book and try and finish him off? Did he deserve it for abusing her? Was she mentally unstable? Will she have to be written out for good? Find out in this latest dramatic episode in the long-running saga of Westminster folk.

Eye Rating: Z-z-z-z-z-z

LE PEN IS MIGHTIER....
THANK GOODNESS, IT COULDN'T HAPPEN HERE
I'VE NOTHING AGAINST THE FRENCH AS LONG AS THEY DON'T COME OVER HERE AND TAKE OUR JOBS
I HOPE THEY DON'T REQUISITION OUR VILLA IN THE DORDOGNE
MIND YOU I'D VOTE FOR HITLER, TO GET US OUT OF THE EU!
PARIS FASHION
I'M GOING TO DUMP MY LITTLE BLACK NUMBER FOR A LITTLE BROWN SHIRT NUMBER
JOHN AND I ARE BOYCOTTING THE FRENCH IMPRESSIONISTS
FASCISM COULD NEVER WORK HERE. EVEN THEY COULDN'T GET OUR TRAINS TO RUN ON TIME!
HEATH

The Secret DIARY OF JOHN MAJOR aged 87½



Monday

I was not inconsiderably delighted to read in the papers that my name had been put forward as the only world statesman who could solve the problems of the Middle East. Apparently, many people have been trying to bring the Israelis and the Palestinians round the peace table, the last being a coloured gentleman from America called Mr Powell, but he came away in no small measure empty-handed. Now a leading Conservative grandee, Mr Sir Patrick Cormack, has pointed out that I would be the ideal man, as I was the prime minister who brought peace to Northern Ireland long before Mr Blair.

Tuesday

I was up all night until 9.30, preparing for my new international role by consulting my Daily Telegraph World Map to discover the whereabouts of the "Left Bank" and "Palestine". I soon found the Left Bank, which is in Paris, but Palestine did not seem to exist. When I pointed this out to my wife Norman over our breakfast of Golden Grahams, she said, "That is why there is a war there. Don't you understand? Would you like me to spell it out for you?" "Oh, no," I said, "of course I know how to spell it, it is just that I can't find it on the map." Sometimes she can be very obtuse.

Wednesday

This morning I took a very firm decision, oh yes. I decided to ring up my old friend Mr Hurd, who is now Mr Lord Hurd of Natwestwell, to see if he could give me some advice on how to find Palestine. When his secretary said "Does he know you?", I became considerably not unannoyed. "Of course he knows me," I told her in my special stern voice for talking to bastards, like Mr Redwood and Mrs Gorman, but she hung up.

Thursday

I have now been waiting for four days for the formal invitation for me to intervene in the Middle East crisis, but to my not inconsiderable irritation the phone has not yet rung. "When are you leaving, John?" asked Norman, "I have packed your bag and put it by the door. I'll even drive you to the station."

(To be continued)

THE DAILY TELEGRAPH Friday, May 3, 2002

Iain Duncan Smith Had 'Stripper' Granny

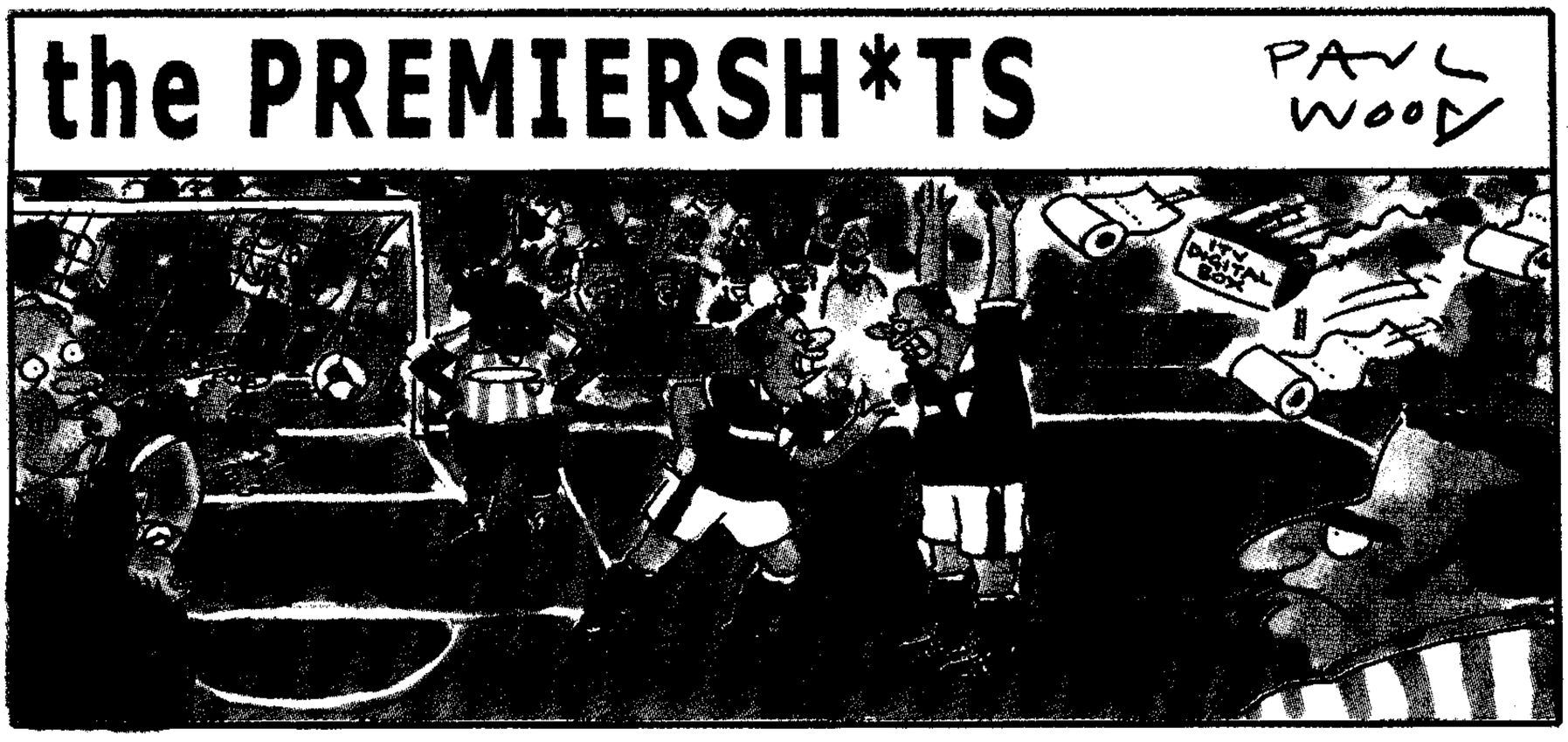
BY DAILY TELEGRAPH POLITICAL STAFF
MADDY TUPP

MR DUNCAN SMITH is not at all boring, it was revealed yesterday.

Documents released to the Daily Telegraph show that his paternal grandmother, Eunice Cough, briefly earned a living in the 1920s by modelling corsets for Trimbodice of Leicester.

In 1923, the young Miss Cough (who later married Group Captain "Buffy" Duncan DSO) was featured in a series of advertisements which were never published, due to a strike by compositors at the Leicester Mercury.

A family spokesman told the Telegraph yesterday, "This is the third bogus attempt to make Iain interesting that you have published this week. When will you give up and leave us alone?"



ME AND MY SPOON

THIS WEEK

NO. 94 SIR JOHN NOTT

Do you have any early memories of spoons?

I have to be perfectly frank with you, I have never given this any thought. But now that you put it to me, as you have done, I must confess that I have no specific memories at least as far as spoons are concerned.

What kind of spoons do you like now?

I have to be perfectly honest, I would find it very hard to articulate any sort of preference now with regard to spoons. I suppose as a Conservative, what one looks for is value for money. One needs choice obviously as much with spoons as with buying your own council house. Am I making myself clear?

Your name is especially associated with the Falklands. Did spoons have any role to play in that conflict?

I think it would be dangerous to give you any kind of definitive answer without referring first to my considerable archive on the subject. But my instinct, thinking off the top of my head, is that the answer is probably no. But you can never be 100 percent sure.

You once famously declined to answer a question and walked out of an interview.

I might have known you would be bringing that up. Well I'm not going to stand for it, do you hear? That's it...

Hello... Sir John? Has anything amusing ever happened to you in connection with spoons? Hello...? Hello...? Hello...?

NEXT WEEK: Adrian Noble – *"Me And My Egg Whisk".*

*Sir John Nott's memoirs "Or Nott As The Case Maybe" have been remaindered before publication and are available for 75p per dozen.

THAT SHARON U.N. COMMISSION

How It Will Look

THE Prime Minister of Israel has submitted to the United Nations the names of observers whom he considers to have "suitable expertise" to form "a sensible judgement" on recent events at the Jenin refugee camp.

The nominees are:

- **General Augusto Pinochet** (former Chilean statesman)
- **The late Dr Verwoerd** (former Prime Minister of the Republic of South Africa)
- **General Ariel Sharon** (no relation)

Israeli troops being withdrawn

Late News

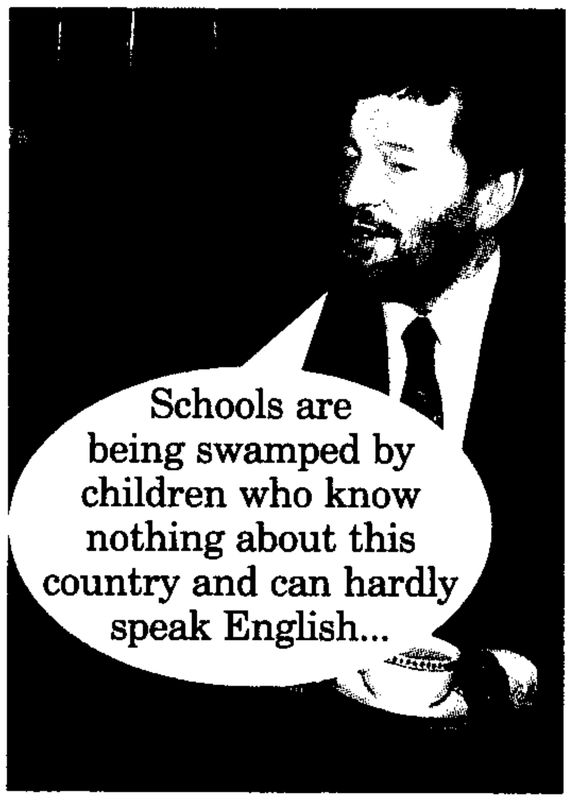
DIGITAL SWITCH-OFF UNDERWAY

THE Government has insisted that its timetable for the transfer of all viewers onto a better television transmission system by 2005 was on schedule.

"The switching off of digital television and transfer to the superior terrestrial service is well underway," said Culture Secretary Tessa Jowell delightedly.

"Digital's day is past. It offers a vastly inferior picture quality, due to the cheap programmes being broadcast on it. Terrestrial is the system of the future.

"Certainly no one could give a monkey's about ITV digital collapsing."



Today Programme

Naughtie *(for it is he)*: ...thanks very much indeed, Ambassador. And now the terrible news, just breaking, about that woman's body which has been found in the Thames. Obviously it's far too early to say for certain that it's the missing schoolgirl Millie, but inevitably there will be speculation that it is indeed the missing teenager, and at such a time it's only natural for us to try to imagine what it must be like for Millie's parents as they sit there waiting for the moment they've dreaded – the moment when they are told that the body in the Thames is that of their daughter. Although, of course, I must emphasise that at the moment we don't yet know for certain that it is Millie. We have on the line someone who can talk us through what it is like for any parent to have to face what is surely any parent's worst nightmare, the chair of the National Association of Grief Councillors...

(The programme continues in similar tasteless vein for several minutes until news bulletin reveals that the body is not that of Millie after all)

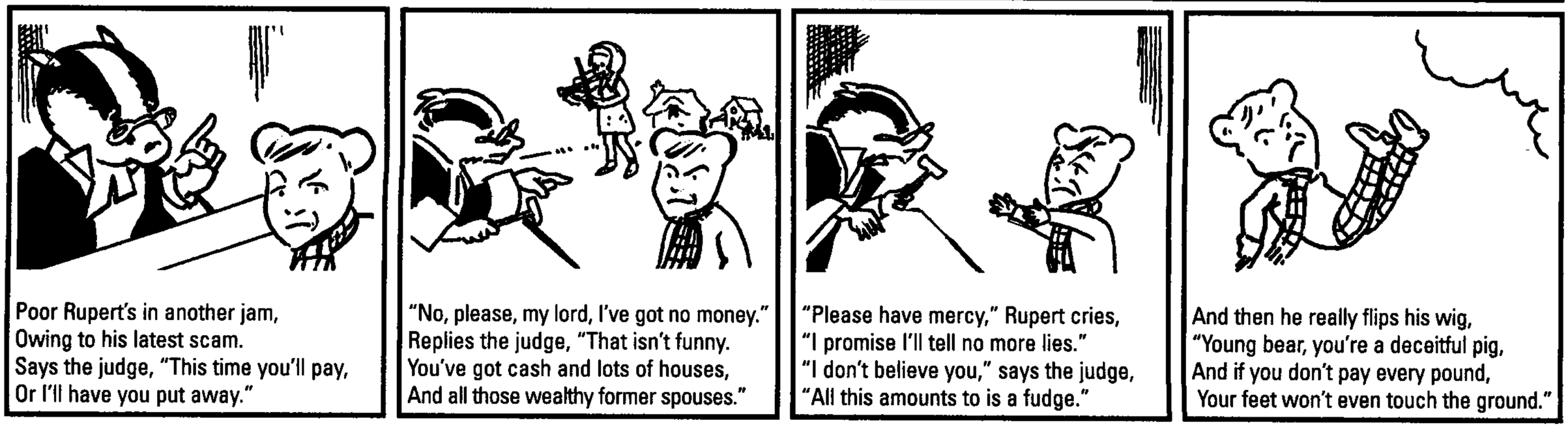
NEWS IN BRIEF

POPE ADMITS: THERE MAY BE PAEDOPHILES IN THE PRIESTHOOD

POPE ADMITS: 'YES, I MAY BE A CATHOLIC'

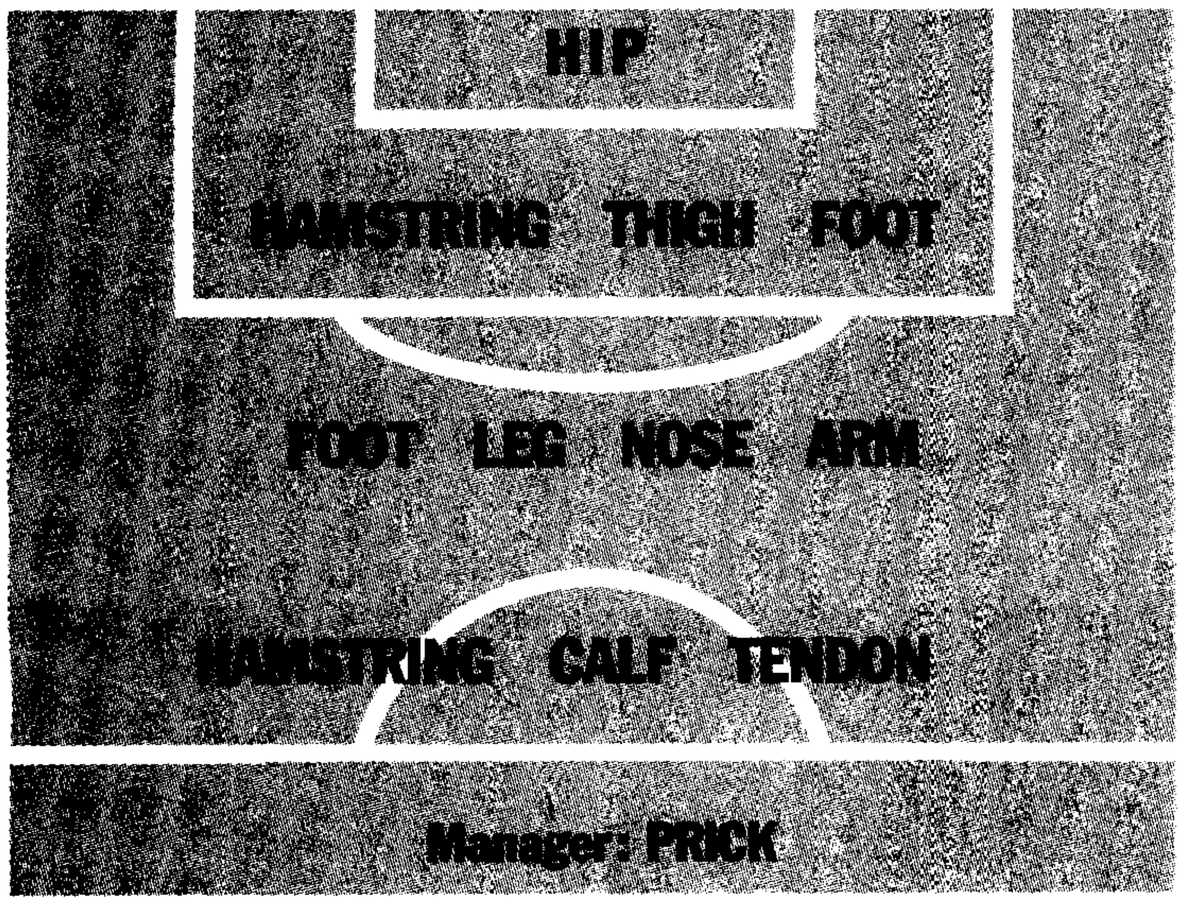
BEAR ADMITS: 'OK, ON SOME OCCASIONS I MAY HAVE SHAT IN THE WOODS'

RUPERT THE BARE-FACED LIAR — Continuing the adventures of Rupert Allason in Nutley Wood Magistrates Court


Poor Rupert's in another jam,
Owing to his latest scam.
Says the judge, "This time you'll pay,
Or I'll have you put away."
"No, please, my lord, I've got no money."
Replies the judge, "That isn't funny.
You've got cash and lots of houses,
And all those wealthy former spouses."
"Please have mercy," Rupert cries,
"I promise I'll tell no more lies."
"I don't believe you," says the judge,
"All this amounts to is a fudge."
And then he really flips his wig,
"Young bear, you're a deceitful pig,
And if you don't pay every pound,
Your feet won't even touch the ground."

To be continued

THAT INJURED ENGLAND SQUAD IN FULL



Dr Thomas Stutterfraud

Medical Briefing

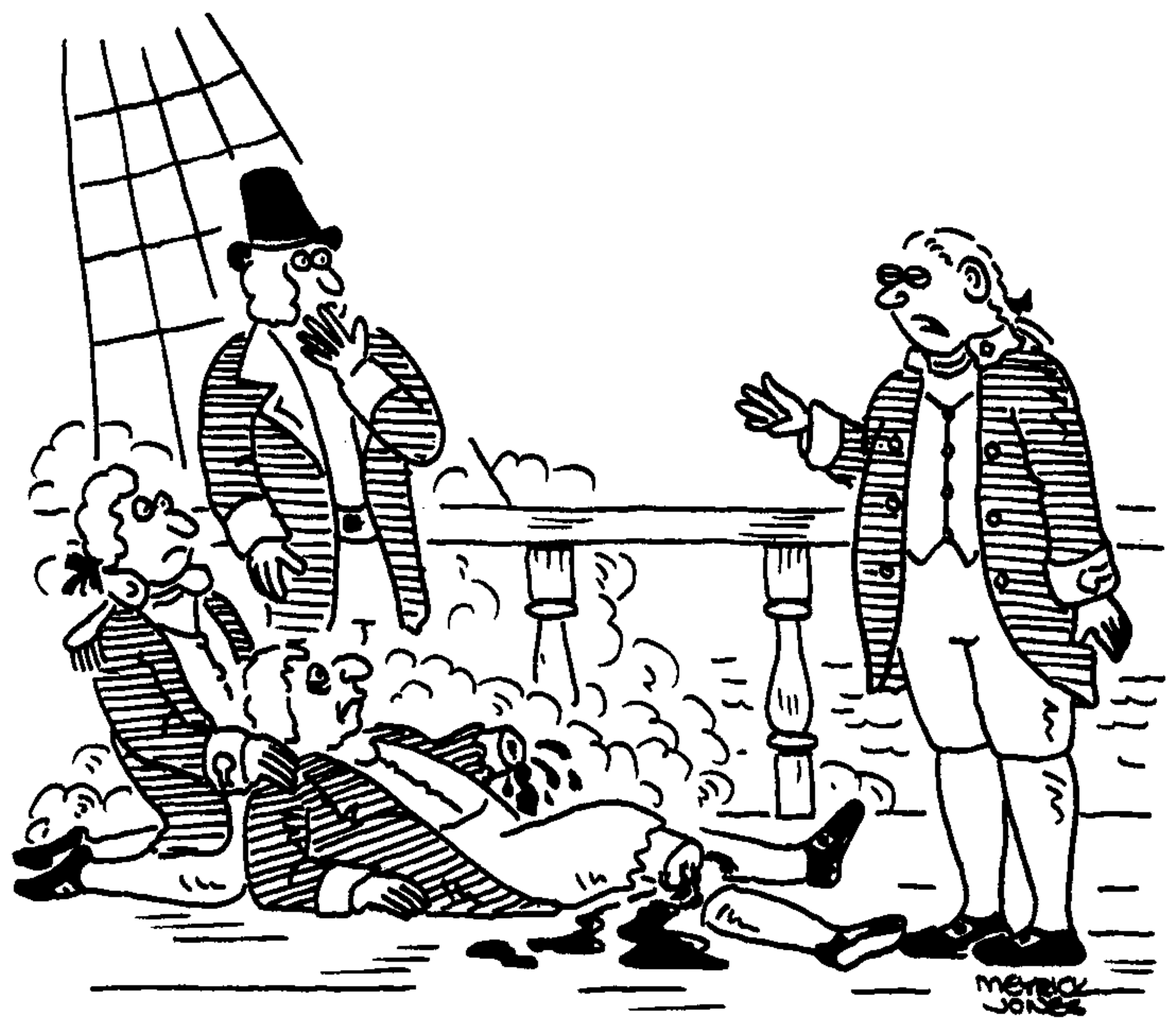
When A Man Has To Choose Between Two Women

The dilemma facing England soccer manager Sven-Goran Eriksson is one which is only too familiar to us doctors. The symptoms are easily recognised: exaggerated heartbeat, palpitations, excessive sweating and loss of memory when the patient is asked "Where were you last night?". Mr Eriksson has reached an age (54) when men are particularly susceptible to this condition. Hair loss can only too easily lead to a diminution in sexual confidence, resulting in a crisis of *(cont. p. 94)*

Friday 12th April for 7 Days:
BEND IT LIKE BECKENHAM (12)
Daily 1.15. 4.00. 6.30. 9.00

Odeon, Beckenham

Alternative Ship's Surgeon



"For the bleeding, I recommend four drops of echinacea extract three times a day. Also, a gentle massage of the kidney area should help boost energy levels"

MANAGER SEEING OTHER WOMAN

by Our Current Affairs Staff **Jean-Marie Le Sven**

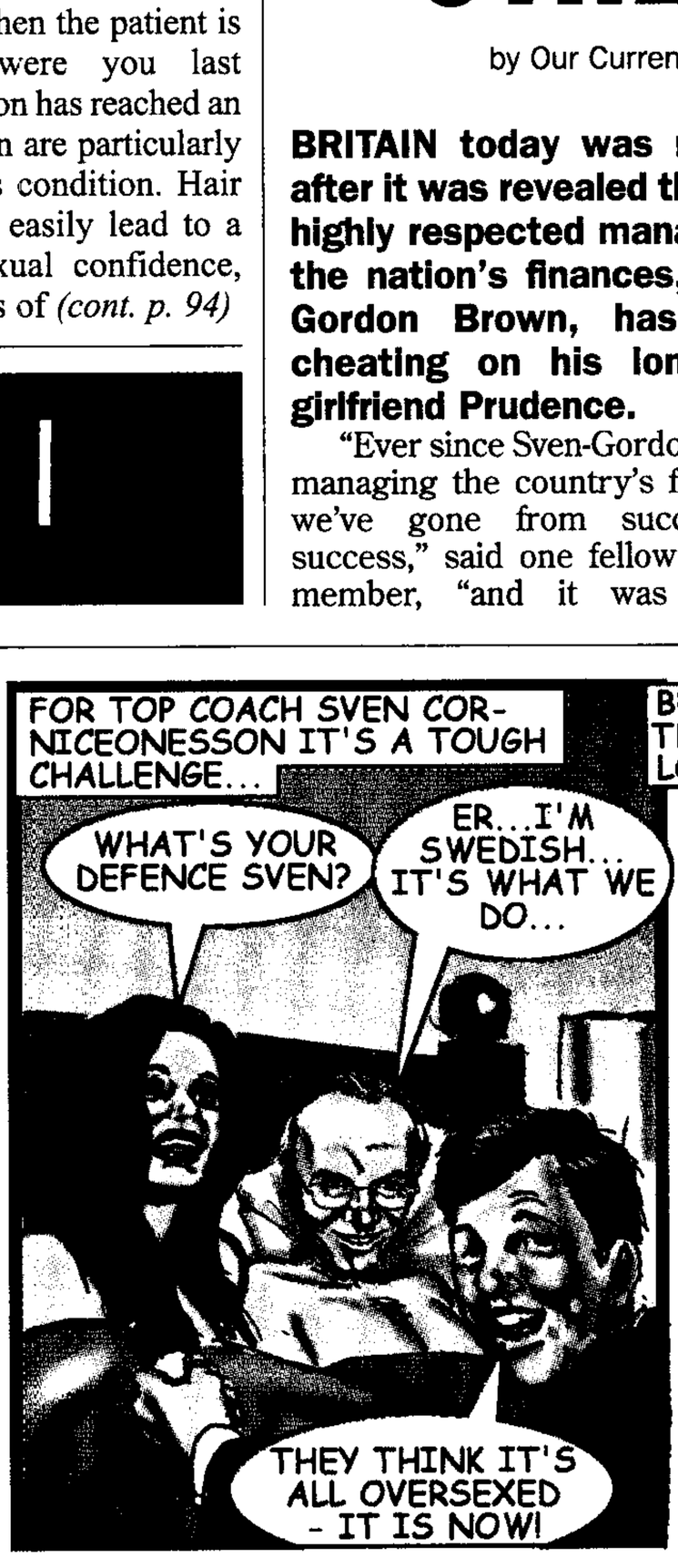
BRITAIN today was reeling after it was revealed that the highly respected manager of the nation's finances, Sven-Gordon Brown, has been cheating on his long-time girlfriend Prudence.

"Ever since Sven-Gordon began managing the country's finances, we've gone from success to success," said one fellow cabinet member, "and it was always Prudence at his side, so to discover on budget day that he'd not only been flirting with a glamorous foreigner called Socialisma, but actually getting into bed with her, well, it came as a tremendous shock."

Dour Sven-Gordon, who is notoriously secretive about his private life, is said to have been first introduced to Socialisma by Alastair Campbell at a party in 1978, and *(cont. p. 94)*

ROY of the ROMPERS

IT'S THE BIG MATCH BETWEEN ULRIKA WANDERERS AND NANCY ATHLETICO
GREAT TACKLE SVEN!
I PREFER TO KEEP THAT PRIVATE
IT'S A PLAYING AWAY GAME!


FOR TOP COACH SVEN COR-NICEONESSON IT'S A TOUGH CHALLENGE...
WHAT'S YOUR DEFENCE SVEN?
ER...I'M SWEDISH... IT'S WHAT WE DO...
THEY THINK IT'S ALL OVERSEXED - IT IS NOW!

BUT AS THE WHISTLE IS BLOWN BY THE PRESS, ULRIKA WANDERERS IS THE LOSER
IT WAS OVER FOR US BEFORE IT BEGAN
JUST LIKE THE WORLD CUP
COME ON YOU RED FACES
J COOPER

END OF AN ERA AS NATION MOURNS

by Our Royal Staff **Lady Antonia Holden**

TRIBUTES poured in from all over the country following the announcement that Britain's best-loved granny Esther Rantzen had passed away from the BBC at the age of 102.

"We shall never see her like again," said a black-tied and visibly moved Peter Sissons, as he read out the news on News 24. "She exemplified all that was best about Britain – she combined an unfailing dedication to public service with a wicked sense of fun, which helped to hold the nation together doing the dark days of the 1920s."

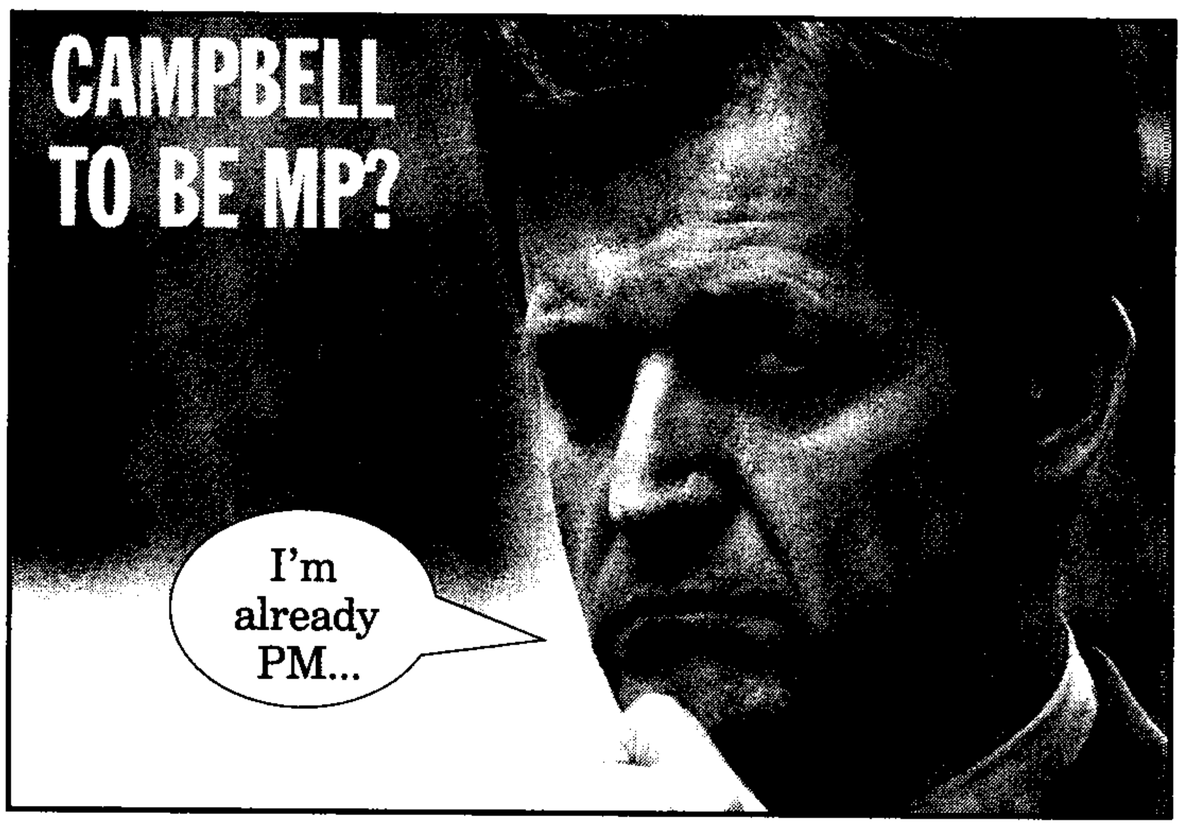
That's Death

Queen Esther was the patroness of hundreds of charities and became Britain's most famous widow following the tragic death of her husband King Desmond.

For decades she kept the nation enthralled with her radiant toothy smile, her faithful entourage of camp young men in fluffy jumpers and her collection of strangely-shaped vegetables.

Yesterday, in silent tribute, members of the public were laying phallic-shaped carrots outside the BBC, as they queued to sign the Book of Relief that she would never be seen on television again.

Perhaps the most moving tribute was that which came from the famous "Talking Dog", who appeared many times with Queen Esther saying the word "sausages". Last night he summed up the mood of the nation when he told reporters "sausages".



"We rob the rich to give to the poorly"

Gerry

POLLY FILLER

ONE film I *WON'T* be going to see is "About A Boy", starring Hugh Grant. Sorry, Hugh, I'm sure you're very good and your new hairstyle is very brave, but the truth is that *REAL* single mothers don't have time to go to the cinema. Why? Because, Hugh, they are far too busy actually looking after their boys – and I don't mean just their energetic toddlers who are furious that the Harry Potter video isn't out yet – I mean, their useless, grown-up boys, the big babies who can't put their own socks in the laundry basket because they are too busy watching pro-celebrity Paint Drying From Toronto presented by Paul Ross on the Sky Sad Channel!

And, Hugh, while I am at it, may I say we single mums are not so desperate that we would jump into bed with the first man with a silly haircut who comes along(!), we are actually independent, career-minded, focused human beings – not just feeble, sex-obsessed girlies desperate for any man to make their lives complete!

WE DON'T need men, thank you – just ask my partner Simon. Just imagine how useless he would be if it weren't for me telling the au pair to iron his shirts and cook his meals! (Very good new Muslim girl from Kandahar who never goes out of the house for religious reasons – brilliant for round-the-clock babysitting and no boyfriend troubles or her family kills him!!!)

So, in future, Hugh, stick to roles where you play the hopeless male idiot and stop stereotyping us single mothers! Credit us with a bit of brainpower. We're interested in more than sex. And, anyway, I fancy Colin Firth a lot more than you.

© *Polly Filler.*

SUN QUIZ FOR KIDDIES

YESTERDAY, David Beckham told the Sun "I am an animal in bed". Now you choose what type of animal most resembles England's captain when he is on the job.

1. Hamster
2. Gerbil
3. Two-toed sloth
4. Yak
5. Moose
6. Duck-billed platypus
7. Tortoise
8. Sheep
9. One-legged Flamingo
(That's enough animals. Ed.)

GREAT JOKES REVISITED: No. 94

DIARY

MO MOWLAM

It soon became evident I wasn't like other politicians. Word got around that I was big-hearted and warm and enjoyed a joke. That I was genuinely nice, disarmingly honest and wholly genuine. And that without mentioning names (smarmy Mandelson, two-faced Blair, Machiavellian Campbell, moody Brown, pompous Irvine) – unlike the others, I was not inclined to criticise colleagues behind their backs.

I was easily the most popular Cabinet Minister in the New Labour Government – and it was beginning to make my stuffy colleagues jealous. I was just too honest and upfront for my own good. "If I could just say a word, Tony, before this meeting gets underway," I'd say in Cabinet, giving Jack Straw a lovely, lovely hug. "Just something I think you all ought to know. On the way here today, a really smashing old lady came up to me, bless her, and said, 'We love you, Mo! You're better than the lot of 'em! How long will we have to wait before you're Prime Minister, then?!'

"I just thought you'd want to know. I knew you'd be happy for me! Thanks, guys!"

Me and my big mouth! Call me innocent, call me too good for this world or whatever, but I had reckoned without their seething jealousy. I soon began to feel desperately isolated. Everyone in the Cabinet was trying their hardest to live up to my professionalism – but sadly I was by far the most popular with the public. And that was when the whispers began. "Whisper whisper whisper." This was what I overheard when I entered Downing Street early one morning hoping to catch up on my mammoth post-bag of fan letters before Cabinet. Tony was huddled up with Gordon and a senior official from the Treasury. "Whisper whisper whisper." "Let us in on the secret, guys!" I joked. Frankly, they didn't know where to look. You see, I could tell that under the guise of "checking" through the "Treasury figures" they were really talking about Yours Truly. Generously, I attempted to set them at their ease by rising above it all. "It's really great you guys are working so hard on your sums!" I said, warmly, "And I think it's really unfair that you backroom boys with your pocket calculators remain under-appreciated by the general public, while I continue to soar ahead in the opinion polls!"

This was the point when my relationship with Tony began to get rocky.

Looking back, he had long nursed resentment of my personal warmth and spontaneity.

During one particularly boring Cabinet, when poor old Gordon was droning on, bless him, about the balance of payment figures (yawn! yawn!) I felt I would be better employed keeping everyone around the table happy by supplying them with food and drink. So I reached below the Cabinet table for my tupperware and thermos, and started spreading the ready-sliced with generous dollops of Hartley's New Jam.

"I'm envisaging a broad-based two and a half percent overall rise over a three-year period, but with a contingency plan if –" droned Gordon. "Jam sandwich, anyone? Choccy biccy?" I said, setting them all at their ease, "Go on, Jack, be a devil – you could do with a bit of feeding up!"

At this point, Gordon (sadly, many of his friends find him a difficult, moody man, and hard to get to know) attempted to interrupt. He had long nursed the ambition to take over from Tony as PM. It must have been very hard watching me sailing ahead of him so effortlessly. But I was determined not to budge from my key role of making everyone happy by keeping up the dialogue. So as he sat there stubbornly blahing on about fiscal policy, I put up my hand and proposed an un-stuffy sing-song. "Anyone know that one off the first Fairport Convention album?" I said.

I am famously sensitive to the little quirks and foibles of other human beings (for my sins!). Was it just me or, even as I was hard at work tuning up my guitar, did I sense a mean-spirited atmosphere springing up around that Cabinet table? I might have expected better of my colleagues, who not so long ago had marched alongside me in the fight for freedom and justice. I was certainly saddened when no-one saw fit to join in, and when I looked up to see Tony's fingers firmly lodged in his ears, I began to wonder whether he was quite up to the job.

I often wonder how big a part my great big hugs played in bringing peace to Northern Ireland.

Northern Ireland is a distant country, full of warm and lovely Irish people who grew to worship me when I ruled over them. "Just call me Mo," I would tell them – and they adored me for it. There were, of course, the inevitable criticisms from the hardened, embittered, intransigent Loyalist community that I favoured the Republican cause. Nothing could have been further from the truth. It was nothing personal, but I just didn't particularly like the so-called Loyalists, and didn't see why they should always refuse to play ball. After all, as I told Trimble, their links with the real mainland British were pretty tenuous, so – dur! – why were they so keen to cling on?

When all else fails, a hug works wonders. I ended our first series of crisis talks by bringing all sides together – not only Trimble and Paisley but reasonable men like Gerry and Martin, put John Lennon's "Imagine" on the CD and called for "one great big huggy-hug". Don't blame me if half of them walked out in a stomp! Talk about babyish!

Tony called me in. I was totally upfront. I asked him to sit down and tell me how best he thought he could serve the New Labour government. He said he thought I should move from Northern Ireland to Health or Education. I told him that I felt the best way to serve my country was to do all three, with the additional option of taking over the Foreign Office once poor Robin Cook, bless him, had been warmly eased out. This was just the sort of broad-based vision for the future that had originally inspired me to fight the cause of New Labour. But it was made clear to me that Tony had lost sight of the vision. What I think was so difficult for everyone to deal with was Tony's attitude that he always knows best, and the way he stubbornly continues to think of himself as Prime Minister.

(Abridged extract from Momentary *by Mo Mowlam, to be remaindered by Hodder & Stoughton on May 30th at £1.95)*

As told to
CRAIG BROWN

Celeb
LIGGER
IT SAYS IN THIS ARTICLE THAT THE WORSHIP OF CELEBRITIES HAS TAKEN THE PLACE OF RELIGION FOR MANY PEOPLE...
THE LOWER A PERSON'S RELIGIOUS CONVICTIONS THE MORE LIKELY THEY ARE TO WORSHIP FAMOUS PEOPLE.
WHILE INDIVIDUALS WITH STRONG RELIGIOUS CONVICTIONS HAVE LITTLE INTEREST IN CELEBRITIES...
RUBBISH JOHNSON!
THE POPE ADORES ME! HE TOLD ME WHEN I HAD AN AUDIENCE WITH HIM...
ABSOLUTELY, SIR...

Literary Review

Unravelling the Mistry

Family Matters

Rohinton Mistry

(Faber, £16.99)

THERE's a sneer which critics sometimes use about a book: "Written to win awards." This insult was originally aimed at Salman Rushdie in the days when old droopy lids was having his tuxedo pushed out of shape by all the envelopes he'd pocketed. However, since Rushdie's personality emerged, he struggles to make the longlist of a hundred with most panels these days.

So, if it really were possible to create identikit cheque-collecting fiction, the man whose work you'd want to examine is Rohinton Mistry. Born in Bombay but long resident in Toronto, Mistry has published only two novels – *Such A Long Journey* (1991) and *A Fine Balance* (1995) – but they have made him the Tiger Woods of fiction, the narrative Pete Sampras.

Both novels won the Commonwealth Writers Prize; each was shortlisted for the Booker. One won the Governor General's Prize. And Mistry's also eaten prawn cocktail courtesy of the caterers for the *Los Angeles Times* Book Prize, the Giller Prize, the International Impac Dublin Literary Award and the *Irish Times* International Fiction Prize. Nine shortlistings for two novels. This guy must feel uneasy if he attends a meal and no one makes a speech.

Mistry's third – *Family Matters* – is out now and he should probably be keeping his evenings free come the autumn. So what's the formula? The crucial element is the exotic. Viewed brutally, Mistry's novel has a sit-com title – that weak pun on the business but also the importance of kin – and a standard TV movie plot: family patriarch, stricken with Parkinson's, presides over three squabbling generations of his clan.

Set it in Streatham and prize committees would giggle and yawn. But Mistry is writing about the Vakeels of Bombay who have not only the exoticism of being Indian but are exotic within the exotic as they belong to the tiny Parsi community, descendants of the Zoroastrian immigrants. This means that narrative prose and dialogue which would read drably in an English context are lifted by the fact that they are addressed to "Jehangir" rather than "John" and that the occasional untranslated Gujarati words – "sataan", "bhaisabad" – distract from the generally flat speech of Mistry's people.

The committees will also respond to the way in which Mistry underpins the familiar business of a death in the family – bedpans and inheritances – with a little background clamour of politics and religious conflict in India. So that will satisfy those literary prize judges who watch the news occasionally, while panellists who like their fiction a bit more contemporary are thrown a bit of po-mo in occasional italic passages in which one character imagines writing all this up as fiction.

Mistry has ritually been compared to Salman Rushdie by pundits to whom all Indian novelists look the same. In fact, he's rather the opposite: a show-the-story prose stylist rather than a show-off one. The main influence on *Family Matters* is Chekhov, with lots of talk about the Parsis dying out and the barbarians taking over Bombay.

Another influence is Vikram Seth whose *A Suitable Boy* was the kind of compendious domestic epic which *Family Matters* craves to be. But the book is also confirmation that the family saga is the new big thing in English-language culture. The Forsytes are back on TV, Jonathan Franzen's *The Corrections* is America's hot book and Ian McEwan's *Atonement* the British equivalent. All are about big clans living in large piles.

This stuff was all written before 11 September when novelists had convinced themselves that the external world was irrelevant and that what really mattered was not whom you voted for but who you might get a birthday card from. The idea that the hearth is the true home-front seems less convincing now but fiction has very long lead times and so publishers had better leave space in the front papers of their books for a lot of family trees. And Mr Mistry wants to get that dinner jacket cleaned.

Books & Bookmen

■ AFTER the poaching come the potty payments publishers must make to ensure their writers *aren't* poached: hence Hodder & Stoughton's Sceptre imprint forking out £800,000 for the second novel by Charles Frazier, author of the best-selling *Cold Mountain*, on the basis of a single-page synopsis.

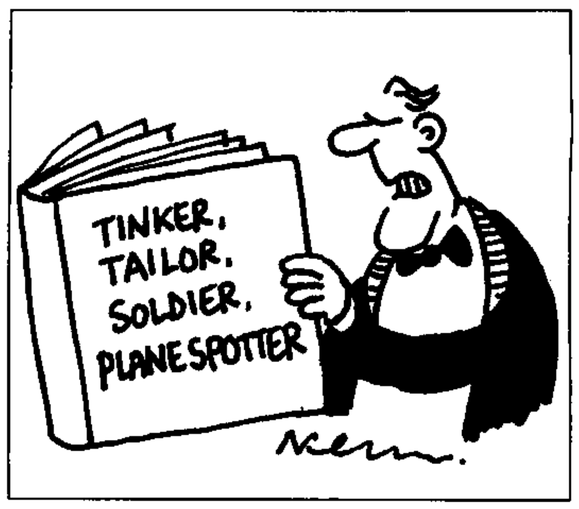
In the US his existing publisher, the independent house Grove Atlantic, had to let him go, unable or unwilling to compete with the $8m Random House stumped up.

Hodder MD Jamie Hodder-Williams announced the payout to the *Bookseller* in curious terms, apparently saying "the deal would represent 'good value' if the novel, which has yet to be titled [*let alone written*], repeated the success of *Cold Mountain*". Was young Jamie speaking through gritted teeth, resenting every last inflated penny screwed out of the company by Frazier's agent, Amanda Urban at ICM?

If so, it wouldn't be surprising. *Cold Mountain* cost Hodder just £30,000. The "if" is telling too. Seeing another publisher run off with the accumulated kudos would be humiliating, for sure, but if there's a chance that the book might fall on its arse, why is Hodder taking such a huge punt on it? Perhaps publishers should be regulated by the Gaming Board.

The reviews come in for Martin Amis' new book, "The War Against Cliché"...
"unputdownable..."
"not a dull page"
"a chronicler of our times"
"tour de force"
"a classic"
BOOKS

■ IT SEEMS former Waterstone's md David "the Mekon" Kneale has returned quietly whence he came following his brief but unhappy love affair with the book trade: he now works as director of trading for Boots the Chemists, his old company. He had no need to rush to the labour exchange though,



having trousered a £293,000 pay-off when sacked last year.

■ MEANWHILE the PR bandwagon is rolling for the HMV Media flotation, mostly focused on what a nice, normal chap HMV Media CEO Alan "Weasel" Giles really is.

"Giles... could not wait for last week to end. Not because he was fed up with talking to bankers, analysts and journalists about the looked-for listing but rather because his daughter had turned 18 and he was keen to get to her party on Friday night," reported the *Observer* warmly.

The *Mail on Sunday* called him "the chinos-wearing chief executive" and "mountain-bike rider Giles". All of which is true enough; but choice of trouser says nothing about the wearer's business skills. Following the announcement that the business had been valued at £835m, some way short of the anticipated £1bn, the *Torygraph* and *Guardian* were tepid while the *Times* gave a forthright "Do not subscribe".

Much of the good PR work being done could be queered by the tribunal being brought by one of the recently-sacked regional managers – if, as is rumoured, the former employee is Lisa Milton. She is the talented bookseller and manager who was on a hiding to nothing the moment she took on "Giles' Folly", the chain's white elephant of a shop at Piccadilly. No one can fault her loyalty, so the outcome will be one to watch with interest.

'Bookworm'

NEW
Margaret Thatcher, a unique figure in global politics, shares her views about the opportunities and dangers of the new millennium.
161
EXCL. EDITION
OFFER price 1p
PAPERBACK
World Books

SNIPCOCK & TWEED
TREMBLING, HE RIPPED OFF HER SOFT, SILKY JACKET...
JILLY COOPER PANDORA
... AND REPLACED IT WITH SOMETHING LESS EMBARRASSING
ZARATHUSTRA'S SECRET
THE LIFE OF NIETZSCHE
JILLY COOPER PANDORA

Warballs

"The terrorist attacks of 11 September could be having an unexpected impact on Cheltenham Animal Shelter. Staff say more stray dogs have been arriving at the Gardners Lane shelter since the attacks on New York and Washington and fewer have been finding homes."

– *Gloucester Citizen.*

"In the wake of the recent terrorist activity many people are considering the issue of personal safety. Clearly, in the event of a biological, chemical or nuclear warfare related attack on the US, arguably the best alternative you could have would be your own personal luxury submarine."

– Advert from US Submarine Inc.

"These businessmen and women go to the 'in' restaurants, but shun the main meals. Instead they plump straight for dessert. 'It reminds them of being a child,' says [lifestyle consultant] Martin Raymond. 'They feel comforted and since 11 September that's been a big issue. It's about pleasure, revenge and sticky toffee pudding.'"

– Feature on "Trunch: The New Lunch", *Mail on Sunday.*

"September 2001 also poignantly revealed the fragility of our lives and businesses. Without doubt, it also raised awareness of the need for flexible commercial solutions to maintain momentum and viability… Without the ability to order and return furniture at a moment's notice, office environments can become congested with empty desks."

– Brochure from Furniture Rental Solutions.

"James Syiemiong has crafted a pair of leather shoes measuring 3.71 metres long and 1.13 metres wide. He says he was inspired to make the shoes, with the help of five colleagues, after seeing the World Trade Centre collapse on television…

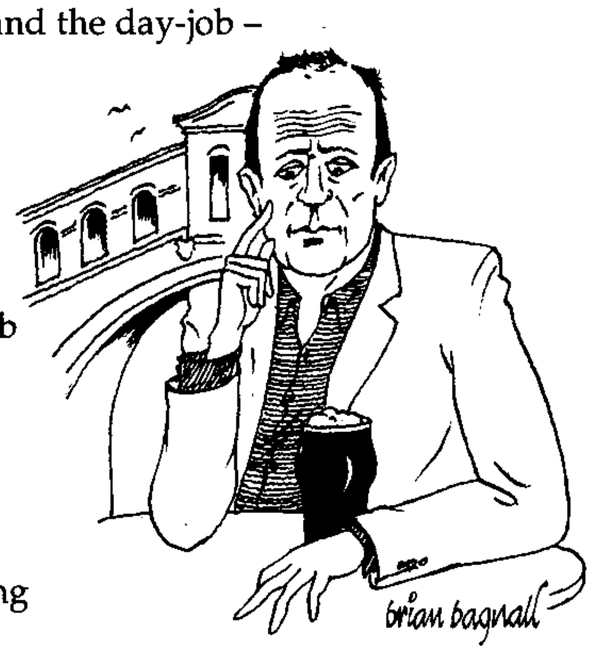
– Report from online newscaster Ananova.com.

He really is a Paulin

The Invasion Handbook, Tom Paulin, *(Faber, £12.99)*

How It All Began
It was back in 2000
and what with the lottery and that
there was all this money just
up for the taking
so I took it.
And they said: "We want something
Significant, you comprendez, so how about the
Origins of the Second World War?"
And I said – notwithstanding the TV and the day-job –
A'm yer fokkin' man.

Weimar (*after Verlaine*)
Why, ma?
And in no way wise
Though marred
In streets wet like damp tinfoil
The republic with a blister on its thumb
The republic with bad dandruff



Anschluss
Back in 68 – a significant year, that –
Me and my mate Neilly
Holidayed in Austria
Quite what this has to do with anything
I don't know. But I'm putting it in
Anyways.

Germany Re-occupies The Rhineland
I'm doing this one in fancy chopped-up lines
That stumble
Across the page
You mustn't worry. It's just
Something that poets
Do every now and again, and I am nothing if not
Predictable.

[and there was heard the stampstampstamp of jackboots like the sound that Philip Larkin made when he walked into the library at hellish Hull]

Abdication
King Edward and his Yankee squeeze
They said
Go walking on the grass
If the Germans ever come
His head
Will be up Hitler's arse.

1937 – The Writers Enlist For Spain
Ah it was grand to be a writer then, bloody grand
Orwell, Spender, Auden and that lot
You could volunteer for the Spanish Civil War and so on
And get your head
Blown off
Now we're reduced to the TV, and making
Provocative statements – that wanker Sharon on the Left Bank! - in the national press
(shooting our mouths off instead of Republican rifles, loosing venom instead of the safety catch)
Ain't it a fokkin' mess?

The Camps
Nazi boots stalk the forest floor
Six million dead — how about some more? (*surely "I am in favour of the current efforts to achieve a two-state solution to the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians" — Ed?)*

September 1940
I thought I'd get Hegel in now
Being somewhat light on the highbrow reference
(though experts will have noted mentions for Heine, Brecht, Dante and others)
The happy band of brothers fight on, though they're still
Neutral in Russia and the Big Bagel
Alas, it's a long way off, this peace that we're winning
Two hundred fokkin' pages already and I've only reached
the end of the beginning.

Continues endlessly…

Pseuds Corner

Wales and Wessex services to Looe are delayed owing to a bovine incursion on the Branch line.

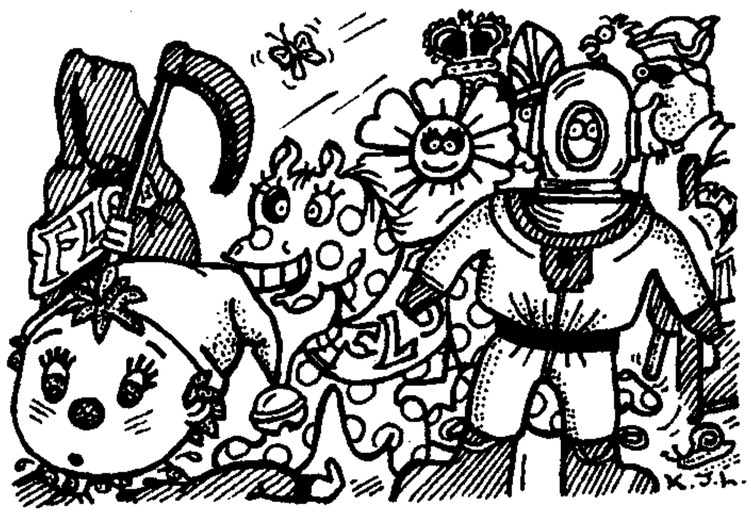
BBC Ceefax transport update

All of India Jane's homes have had some common elements: dogs of a variety of breeds, enormous amounts of dog hair, and dog beds in every room; a vast choice of teas; and weeks with no lightbulbs which, in her present house with many floors, means blindly feeling her way upstairs at night, and putting on make-up in a shadowy bathroom.

She rarely socialises; she has no time. The early part of the day and often the end are spent in a form of esoteric contemplation. Dog walks and the requirements of Nina, her queenly, vicious Indian Pie dog, and Mickey, her rescued, slightly fragile whippet, steal time away from her painting…

She refuses to do what bores her, and is quite happy to live with the resulting disorder. Jane rarely inhabits her beguiling outer form and constructs some form if web, rather to protect herself than to entrap. She does not need to entrap, as everything she does allures, from her paintings to her home to her cooking.

MIRANDA BROOKS on artist
India Jane Birley
Sunday Telegraph Magazine



A new species of butterfly, hitherto unknown to science: scientific name *Paula gloriosa*. I wonder if it is one of those species that goes on and on, or whether it fades and dies as soon as it appears.

SIMON BARNES greets Paula Radcliffe's victory in the London Marathon
The Times

The Nunc Dimittis hallmark stamped upon events – that merger of an extroverted vigour with an absolute control – seems as unmistakable these days as vintage Rhone.

DEREK JOLE
concert review, *Oxford Times*

Pseuds Corporate

We're sort of in the Hegelian synthesis of figuring out where the products go once they've encountered the reality of the marketplace.

CHARLES FITZGERALD (Microsoft's "general manager for platform strategy")
New York Times

"Civilisation is what we are. The cycle of evolution moves towards increasing power as we decrease volume. This is dematerialisation, disincarnation.

In the same way a computer has shrunk from the size of a house to a room to a book to a credit card. Now comes the bionic. I crease this brand to show this. It is not a watch, but a polyvalent deliverer of service."

PHILIP STARCK
Watch Magazine

Contributors: Charles Jones, V. Gibberd, APR, Anon, Anonymous BBC employee, 'Snooky Wookums'

£10 paid for all entries

IN THE BACK

SAFETY LAST WITH CONNEX

LAURENCE Holden was an experienced train driver who drove trains in the south-east for 24 years. There were just two problems. Firstly, he cared about the safety of his fellow workers and passengers. Secondly, he worked for Connex South Eastern.

Connex managers couldn't stand the way Mr Holden took his duties as health and safety representative seriously. Almost from the moment Connex took control of trains in the south-east, directors and managers were irritated by Mr Holden's justified complaints.

When he complained about a dangerous walkway on which he slipped, narrowly missing a live rail, the firm did nothing about it. When he raised the danger of a slippery surface on a platform at Slade Green, nothing was done about it until a year after three drivers slipped on the surface and were injured.

Driver Holden: Safe and sacked

A fellow driver pointed out a potentially dangerous tunnel between Hildenborough and Sevenoaks, so Mr Holden raised it with Connex managers. They said it was a matter for Railtrack, which it was; but none of them mentioned the matter to Railtrack or anyone else until a train was damaged when part of the tunnel panelling fell on it.

Mr Holden also raised the problem of the intense and growing heat in the drivers' cabins, where there was no air conditioning. It was not until he reported the problem directly to the railways inspectorate that air conditioning was installed. But the worst problem for Mr Holden – one that led to constant complaints from his colleagues – was long working hours.

Thanks to "restructuring" introduced by Connex in 1997, the old limit of nine hours per shift (itself very tough) was removed. First the firm tolerated 11-hour shifts; then it generously reduced the limit to ten and a half hours. The natural consequence was that drivers suffered increasingly from intense fatigue, and many complained to Mr Holden about it. They were reluctant to complain directly to managers for fear of losing their jobs and equally reluctant to take days off work and face the heavy penalties imposed.

Another problem facing Mr Holden was that his union, ASLEF, had agreed the new programme and recommended it. A majority of drivers, impressed by the pay increases involved, had voted for it. Nevertheless Mr Holden continued to raise the problem of long hours and driver fatigue. He linked both with the increasing number of SPADS (signals passed at danger). He wrote to the 70 drivers he represented asking them to give him details of any SPADS in their experience. His bosses told him his letters to fellow-drivers put him at risk of a charge of harassment.

The victimisation rose to a crescendo. Early one morning he was delayed while talking to a driver about safety, and was eight minutes late starting his train. The train was empty at the time, and made up all the lost time by the first station. Yet Mr Holden was given a severe reprimand. He appealed against it – successfully – but his manager told him that "no repeat" would be tolerated.

In January 1999 Mr Holden sent a report to the inspecting officer of railways. "A very serious situation has been created," he wrote, "by making a group of safety-critical workers work for excessively long hours. A very serious incident is waiting to happen." Ten months later a driver passed a red light and the result was the horrific disaster at Ladbroke Grove.

The Connex managers were outraged by Mr Holden's report. A senior manager told him that head office had passed on instructions to "deal with" him. This did not stop Mr Holden continuing to raise health and safety matters, and continuing to be victimised for it. In October 1999, as a result of the Ladbroke Grove disaster, he wrote another report on long hours and fatigue and sent it to the then secretary of state John Prescott and to Lord Cullen, chairman of the public inquiry into the disaster.

Mr Holden was promptly charged with writing a report that "contains emotive inaccurate inciteful (sic) personal opinions and statements that are damaging to the company". He got a severe reprimand and a final warning. He was warned that any further reports or similar behaviour would result in instant dismissal. He resigned, wrote a long letter justifying his behaviour, and sued Connex, alleging victimisation and unfair constructive dismissal. The tribunal hearings took eight days last November.

Mr Graham Walker, an ASLEF official, gave evidence for the company. The tribunal was not impressed and described Mr Walker as "a company man". In a long, devastating judgment the London South tribunal rejected every single one of Connex's arguments. They praised Mr Holden for taking his responsibilities very seriously, and clearly regarded the role of such representatives as crucial to railway safety. Mr Holden got £55,000 in damages, including a substantial sum in aggravated damages. If he had not turned down a job far away from his Tonbridge home, the sum for loss of earnings would have been much higher. But Connex can regard the result as cheap at the price. They have lost a fine driver and sturdy representative – but who cares? In future, what Connex worker will dare mention any complaint about health, safety or anything else?

PAL JOHNSON

THERE was an unusual demonstration on 24 April when 50 post office workers gathered at the department of trade and industry. The object of their protest? Alan Johnson, minister in charge of employment tribunals and a former general secretary of the demonstrators' own union, the Union of Communication Workers (UCW).

The cause is a familiar one in the UCW. Two years ago two north London brothers, Mick and Tom Doherty, were photographed in the *Daily Mirror* allegedly taking part in a disturbance in Copenhagen after the UEFA cup final between Arsenal and the Turkish club Galatasaray. Though they protested that they were not hooligans and had done their best to defend themselves and the Arsenal party from a violent assault, both were suspended and later sacked by the Post Office (or Consignia as it ludicrously came to be known).

The Dohertys took their case to employment tribunals where they were unanimously judged not guilty of any discreditable behaviour. Their dismissals, the tribunals found, were unfair and Consignia was ordered to give them back their jobs. It refused to do so.

The case of Tom Doherty is now going to the employment appeals tribunal; and if Consignia loses its appeal, the indications are that it will reinstate Tom Doherty. But the company is adamant that it doesn't want Mick Doherty back under any circumstances, saying that such a course would be "impractical".

This impracticality may or may not have something to do with the fact that Mick is branch chairman of the North-North West London branch of the UCW and is known as a stalwart fighter for his members. The whole London area of the UCW is now being balloted for strike action in support of the full and unconditional reinstatement of both Doherty brothers.

Mick Doherty knows Alan Johnson well from former union days, and was shocked that the minister was not at the department to greet the delegation from his former union. "I have written to Alan at least three times," he tells the *Eye*. "But he hasn't bothered to reply." The union from top to bottom is committed to a change in the law to force employers to offer jobs back to workers they have sacked and who have been adjudged unfairly dismissed at tribunals – but Mr Johnson has firmly resisted such a course. "I wonder," says Mick Doherty, "if he has forgotten where he came from."

HIGGS IN THE MIDDLE

ONE by-product of the Enron scandal has been the unflattering light it has shone on the role of non-executive directors in general.

The growing suspicion is that these part-time board members, supposed guardians of shareholders' money who are meant to bring a fresh, independent eye to a company's management, might not be all they're cracked up to be. Some cynics suspect they might sometimes even be little more than a tight coterie of self-serving fat cats, more interested in awarding each other money than ensuring firms are well managed.

So who has trade and industry secretary Patricia Hewitt chosen to run her post-Enron review of non-executive directors? Step forward Derek Higgs, a man, as Hewitt says, with a "wealth of experience" for this sort of thing.

Her review aims to examine how "non executives are appointed and how they can be drawn from a wider pool of talent". Higgs certainly knows how to get appointed all right. Labour has made him chairman of the privatisation body Partnerships UK; and it has put him on the board of London Transport to speed through its privatisation. The fact that he served on the board of Coventry City FC with former paymaster-general Geoffrey Robinson is coincidental: he currently serves on no fewer than 18 boards.

The Hewitt review will look at "the independence and effectiveness of non-executives" too. Higgs wasn't that effective, sadly, sitting on the board of Allied Irish Bank when it lost £540m thanks to a Nick Leeson-like rogue trader. Higgs and his non-execs allowed what the bank's own report called a "weak control environment" to develop. And they demonstrated their independence when the bank's chief executive and chairman offered to resign – and Higgs and Co immediately allowed them to keep their jobs, preferring to sack six more junior staff in America.

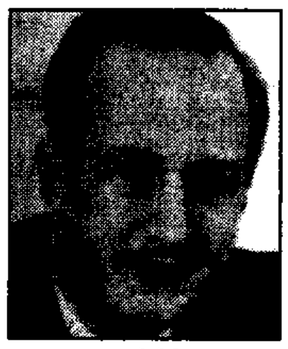
Higgs is also a paid senior adviser to UBS Warburg in the UK. And funnily enough, when his former deputy at Partnerships UK, Adrian Montague, became deputy chairman of Network Rail, the replacement for Railtrack, Network Rail needed a banker and turned immediately to... UBS Warburg. So, just the man for the job, then.

Those other Higgs directorships in full: Allied Irish Banks plc; Arena 2001 Ltd; The British Land Company plc (deputy chairman); Business in the Community (deputy chairman); Coventry City FC Ltd; Coventry City FC (Holdings) Ltd; Egg plc; F.A. Fisher Ltd; Goldthorne Properties Ltd; Hanwood Properties Ltd; Hope Property Managements Ltd; Jones Lang LaSalle; London Regional Transport; Prudential Banking plc; Sundorne Properties Ltd; Tilewood Properties Ltd; Stonebury Properties Ltd; Unicorn House Ltd.

THE FANTASTIC MRS FOX

MONDAY 22 April was an important day in the House of Lords. The law lords were due to hear an appeal in the notorious Fairchild case on the liability of firms for damage caused by asbestos.

As explained in *Eye* 1045, the appeal court decided that an asbestos sufferer could not successfully sue any company unless he or she could prove that the damage was caused during their actual employment with that company. So, even if plaintiffs could prove that their employer had negligently exposed them to asbestos and that their illness was caused by asbestos, if they couldn't prove that the precise fibres that caused the damage had been ingested while working for that specific firm, they could not sue.



Lords in law: Brennan and Hunt

The judgment caused fury among the growing army of asbestos sufferers, many of whom are dying of the painful lung disease mesothelioma. Three plaintiffs appealed to the Lords against the court of appeal decision.

The Association of British Insurers and employers who had negligently exposed workers to asbestos were delighted with the Fairchild judgment and anxious to stop it being overturned. Lawyers for the ABI have close contacts with the House of Lords. Their solicitors are Beachcroft Stanleys, whose senior partner is former Tory cabinet minister Lord Hunt, and their barrister is Labour peer Lord Brennan QC.

In the days before the case was due to be heard, the ABI offered a deal to the plaintiffs by which they would be compensated in exchange for dropping the action. If the deal was agreed by all three plaintiffs, the insurers would pay up, the cases would be dropped and the dubious Fairchild judgment would stand unchallenged for the future.

Four days before the case was due to be heard, Lord Hunt filed a petition asking their lordships not to hear the case. "The present appeals," said the Hunt petition, "will be settled by the payment of damages and costs." Naturally the law lords, led by Lord Bingham, agreed not to hear the case the following Monday. *Whoops!* It then emerged that one of the three appellants, a gallant woman called Doreen Fox whose husband had died of mesothelioma, had *not* agreed to settle the case. Quite the contrary. She declared that her husband would have liked to have the Fairchild issue debated in court and settled by a judgment.

So how and why were the Lords given false information? Appearing for two of the appellants before the law lords on 22 April, Sir Sidney Kentridge QC described the background as "a sordid attempt to manipulate the judicial process". Who was responsible? Lord Brennan said he wasn't. So did Lord Hunt, though he did admit that he had personally gone to the Lords judicial office to file his petition. There was, he told the *Daily Telegraph*'s Joshua Rozenberg, nothing odd about this. "As a solicitor," he said, "I often visit the Lords judicial office." So that's all right, then.

Anyway, thanks to Mrs Fox, the sordid attempt has failed. The full case will now start in the Lords on 7 May.

MMR: THE ROYAL FREE AND THE DRUG COMPANY

MORE on the MMR controversy and the Royal Free hospital in north London, which dispensed with the services of pioneering gastroenterologist Dr Andrew Wakefield after his research team uncovered a possible link between the triple vaccine and regressive autism and gut disease.

The findings made Dr Wakefield hugely unpopular with the government and the health establishment at large – among them his boss at the Royal Free, the former dean Arie Zuckerman, who always made his opposition clear.

Funnily enough, it was under Zuckerman's deanship that the Royal Free medical school set up a specialist vaccine research unit in 1993 endowed by none other than the drug company formerly known as SmithKline Beecham. Now known as GlaxoSmithKline, it just happens to be one of the three defendant drug companies in the forthcoming civil action involving children who are said to have been damaged by the MMR triple jab!

Coincidentally, the director of unit, called the Academic Centre for Travel Medicine and Vaccines and the Royal Free Clinical Trials Centre, is one Dr Jane Zuckerman, Arie Zuckerman's daughter. Her latest paper on hepatitis, published in *Vaccine* in January this year, was jointly authored with a representative of GlaxoSmithKline. Ain't life cosy!

To find out more about MMR and how drug companies influence research and health policy, see the Private Eye *special report* MMR: The Story So Far. *On sale at newsagents.*

HECK OF A GUY

DAVID GUY, who spent time in intensive care after being injured in the Great Heck rail crash, writes again to the *Eye* to protest about the authorities' lack of action in responding to the disaster.

He points out that two government reports have been compiled but their main effect has been to ensure that no action follows and as little as possible public money is spent. Only in North Yorkshire, where the accident took place, have any new barriers have been built to protect rail and road intersections.

Government transport ministers, led by John Spellar, bleat about the expense of remedial over-reaction. But if the new barriers in North Yorkshire were extended to all the country's 200 sites requiring such barriers, the total cost would be £5m. The very highest estimate for such action is £20m. Compare that with the insurance bill for the Selby rail crash – now estimated at £1.4bn.

The problem, Mr Guy stresses, is one of liability. Blame North Yorkshire county council for Great Heck, and it says the Highways Agency is responsible. But the Highways Agency stresses that it is responsible only for motorways and has nothing to do with sensitive crossings on less prominent roads. For the future, after the two official reports, neither of which is any use for assigning financial responsibility, the rail and highway authorities are, writes Mr Guy, "invited to consider a risk assessment framework in prioritising future works".

He asks: "Isn't a risk assessment framework set up by Railtrack and dictating where they and the highways authorities should spend money, a conflict of their interests?" He suggests that many of these points could have been made forcefully at an inquest over the 11 deaths at Great Heck. But, writes Mr Guy, with the publication of the two reports, "the prospects of an inquest have diminished. Who therefore is provoking constructive changes?"

HUMBER HUMBUG

LETTERS, all protesting loudly that their authors are not stooges for the big ports company ABP, continue to pour into the *Eye* defending ABP's case against the pilots on the Humber. (The experienced pilots have been replaced by others nominated and trained by ABP, the company that owns and controls the Humber ports.)

None of the letters though makes any comment about the rather serious incident at the beginning of April when the ro-ro ferry Stena Gothica ploughed into a jetty at Immingham, suffering a five-metre gash below its waterline. The damage flooded the ship's engine room. The wounded ferry had to be towed into the dock and its cargo of trucks was lifted off by crane.

Tugs were trapped inside the lock gates for 14 hours, and vessels outside could not move. The Stena Gothica was patched up and managed to limp back to Landskrona, Sweden, where it will be expensively repaired.

On board the ferry at the time of the crash was an ABP pilot. ABP denies responsibility for the smash, protesting that the master of the ferry had taken control at the time. This did not impress the former pilots who know perfectly well that the master of a ship is always in control of his vehicle, whatever the standard of the advice he gets from his pilots. Moreover the master of the Stena Gothica did not hold a pilotage exemption certificate because the vessel does not often put in to Immingham.

On this occasion it had made a special detour to pick up steel. *International Freighting Weekly* revealed on 8 April that "several shipping companies" are considering legal action against ABP "after insurers have refused to pay for damages caused by inexperienced pilots". Meanwhile government ministers seldom lose an opportunity to declare their solidarity with ABP.

WYETH OH WYETH

THE extent of drug company sponsorship in British medicine was illuminated briefly by a small firefight on the pages of the British *Journal of Psychiatry*.

In a recent edition, one I.C. Wright wrote to point out the links between the journal and Wyeth, an international drug firm that makes the anti-depressant Venlaxafine. Wright highlighted how the *Journal* had carried a paper written by two Wyeth employees and a Wyeth consultant in which Venlaxafine was described as having benefits over other anti-depressants. Wyeth now cites the paper in advertisements for Venlaxafine.

While the *Journal* admitted the authors' links to the drug company, it did not highlight its own links to the same firm. As Wright revealed, the *Journal*'s editor Greg Wilkinson receives £2,000 a year from Neurolink, a mental health board which is also paid for by Wyeth. Wright claimed that Neurolink itself favours the firm's Venlaxafine, but the Neurolink board rejects this.

PS: Wright had to highlight his own conflict of interest, revealing that he too was sponsored by a drug firm and received £2,000 a year for editorial work in *Schizophrenia Monitor*, a review sponsored by Pfizer.

PPS: Wyeth also sponsors the parliamentary health and manufacturing groups; and until recently paid former Tory health secretary Virginia Bottomley £5,000 for consultancy work. Earlier this year Pfizer took Crispin Blunt, Tory MP for Reigate, and Labour MP for Erith John Austin to see the film *Iris* (Pfizer is interested in Alzheimer's disease). There was a reception first and dinner at the Park Lane Hotel afterwards.

You can contact Paul Foot on 020 7287 3183 or the In the Back team on 020 7437 4017

In the City

ARE stress fractures starting to appear inside the Knightsbridge financial pyramid of phoney pharaoh Mohamed Fayed? Certainly that could be the interpretation of his increasing reliance on ever larger borrowings: first for Harrods; then for the Paris Ritz; and now for his most expensive toy, premiership strugglers Fulham, at a time when the one-time top people's store is finding trading difficult.

Fayed has turned to outside sources to help finance his football fantasies obtaining loans secured on the Premiership TV cash and buying players via finance leases.

Fulham borrowed £8m in February from GE Capital secured on the TV money for the next two seasons. This loan is to be repaid by August 2003. Fayed must be mightily relieved therefore that Fulham escaped relegation. A further £6m by June last year had also been spent on finance leases for players.

Just how great a drain Fulham is placing on Fayed's finances is disclosed by the latest accounts for the soccer club and its UK parent. These show that the club lost almost £22m in the 2001 season when it won promotion to the premiership as division one champions. Fulham's total income at £10m was just over half the £19m wage bill for players and manager. The club owed Fayed £50m – and that was before it spent a further £32m on players. The TV gold mine for premiership clubs and the FA cup run will have boosted Fulham's revenues this season, but another big loss is inevitable given the inflated wage bill. And now Fayed has to finance the new Craven Cottage due to open in two years' time.

Fulham is owned by Fayed from the British Virgin Islands tax haven via Fulham Football Leisure. His BVI company, Fulham Leisure Holdings, had by June 2001 loaned the UK company £57m interest free. Fayed has also pumped in a further £2m for new shares over the past two years. Harrods too has lent a hand. It loaned £3.5m to the club during the year.

And a year on the numbers will now be even greater with debt approaching £100m. Just how Fayed manages to lend such a huge amount interest free is one of the growing mysteries surrounding the Knightsbridge pyramid. It is probably also one the Inland Revenue is keen to solve.

Fayed is assumed to be non-domiciled in the UK for most tax purposes although he will be "deemed" to be domiciled for inheritance tax purposes having lived here more than 17 years. That means he can remit capital but not income into the UK tax free. But what is the source of that £57m? Past Harrods dividends, ie income? There are few alternatives unless the money somehow emerges from other Fayed companies' revenues or borrowings. Few make profits.

Fayed's deal with the taxman – since revoked – to pay a maximum £240,000 a year no questions asked looks derisory in comparison with what he has spent at Fulham and at *Punch* – another £13m and rising – and his £50,000 a week walking round money.

THOSE who doubt the chances of a successful prosecution resulting from the Serious Farce Office raids on six generic drug suppliers will not be dissuaded by news that no decision is expected until well into next year. The raids netted some one million documents on paper and another two million on computer. These will need to be analysed before any charges are brought arising from the alleged price-fixing and over-pricing.

Without a senior inside whistleblower, making such charges stick by proving that the six companies were operating a secret cartel which defrauded the NHS is going to be a hard task. For example, without the evidence of Christie's Christopher Davidge, his opposite number at Sotheby's Diana Brooks would not have "rolled"; and without her Sotheby's chairman Alfred Taubman would not now be heading for jail for fixing commissions; and Davidge's ex-boss Sir Anthony Tennant would not be a fugitive from US justice. That's how vital a high-placed informant is to price-fixing cases.

There is no precedent for a case alleging fraud based purely on price-fixing and profiteering. The SFO hopes it will find the evidence amid the three million documents and from lower level executives. But that approach failed when Scotland Yard attempted to mount a widespread prosecution of insurance companies for pension mis-selling a year or so ago.

But for now the politicians have what they wanted. Headlines stating that the NHS could claw back £400m from the guilty generic suppliers. No doubt health secretary Alan Milburn, who pushed very hard for the raids despite doubts about the legal basis for any prosecution, will not be around if in 2003 or 2004 it is decided not to bring any charges.

Meanwhile the SFO might consider one interesting coincidence. Isaac Kaye, boss of Norton Healthcare, the largest generic drug company, is no stranger to the Tabatznik family who ran another of the raid targets – Generics UK, owned since 1999 by the German company Merck – during most of the period of the alleged price-fixing from 1996 to 2000.

Kaye and David Tabatznik were business associates in apartheid South Africa's generic drug industry before both sold out and left. Both resigned from South African Druggists in 1982. Subsequently Kaye and the much younger Tony Tabatznik became generic drug suppliers to the NHS – and generous "new" Labour donors.

SO Equitable Life is going to sue its auditor Ernst & Young and most of the directors who drove it on to the rocks of the guaranteed annuity rate (GAR) pensions. Equitable policyholders who see this as little more than PR gloss to hide the worsening situation – higher exit fees and even more reduced or removed bonuses – are right to be cynical.

Especially as Equitable is not taking action against its lawyers, Denton Wilde Sapte, on whose advice presumably the directors and Ernst & Young would seem to have acted when not providing for the £1.5bn GAR bill and deciding to take the GAR issue to court. Is the new Equitable board suggesting that the lawyers gave advice that was ignored by the board and auditors? Or was it all the fault of m'learned friends?

Ernst & Young meanwhile will not only point to legal advice but also to what it was told by Equitable's top actuaries/chief executives – Roy Ranson, Alan Nash and Christopher Headdon – who are all now being sued for negligence.

Recovery from the 15 former directors via their/Equitable's insurers is likely to be relatively negligible after legal costs. So why not in the meantime stop or attach the very generous pensions currently being paid to Messrs Ranson and Nash or any other former director who is being sued?

AFTER 10 years of being a share tipster "Changi Jim" Slater considers it is safe to return to the stock market as chairman of a quoted company for the first time since Slater Walker imploded in 1975. The Sunday newspapers were full of orchestrated compliments for the "legendary" Slater, who is to be chairman of BioProjects International. But then Jim always knew how to massage the hacks.

Most dwelled more on the build up of Slater Walker and his comeback from mythical "minus millionaire" status than on the circumstances surrounding his fall. It will be interesting to see what further illumination is provided in the prospectus for the £4m placing by brokers Seymour Pierce. But then it is all a long time ago. Before the electronic databases that dictate history to those who weren't there.

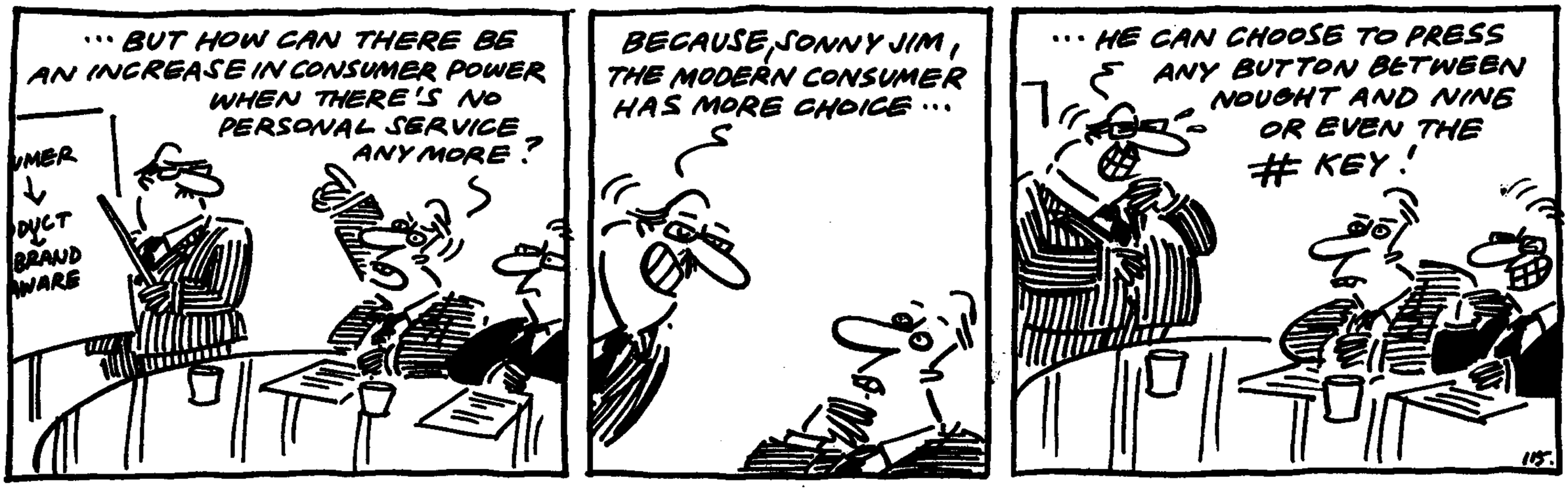
So before everyone goes overboard for "guru" Slater, a history lesson. Slater was the grand daddy of the City Slickers. Before Slater Walker took off he tipped shares for the *Sunday Telegraph* and made a secret fortune by dealing in his tips ahead of the readers.

Slater Walker failed after the 1974 market crash because it was built on an incestuous network of interlocking insider loans and insider share dealing. Slater and his lieutenants were incentivised through undisclosed investments in SW vehicles at rock bottom prices financed by undeclared loans. Slater spent millions of SW money supporting its share price through undisclosed share dealings.

The Slater Walker mess was cleared up by the taxpayer providing up to £110m to rescue the SW bank. So concerned was the Bank of England, it dissuaded the Labour government from an intended DTI investigation because of the damage to the City's reputation. Instead, all Slater received was a DTI criminal conviction for breaching the

THE DIRECTORS

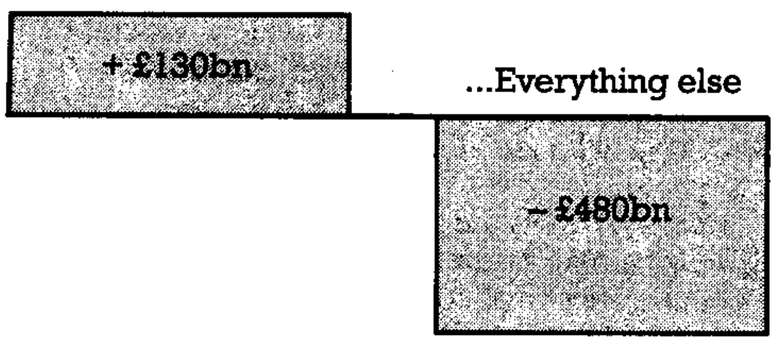
DREDGE/RIGG


... BUT HOW CAN THERE BE AN INCREASE IN CONSUMER POWER WHEN THERE'S NO PERSONAL SERVICE ANYMORE?
UMER
DUCT
BRAND
WARE
BECAUSE, SONNY JIM, THE MODERN CONSUMER HAS MORE CHOICE ...
... HE CAN CHOOSE TO PRESS ANY BUTTON BETWEEN NOUGHT AND NINE OR EVEN THE # KEY!

Stock Horror

Ariel Sharon and George Bush's war

Change in value this year across the world's stock markets of...



companies act by using SW money to buy its shares. He was fined £225 in 1979.

The Singapore government narrowly failed to have Slater extradited to face charges of conspiracy and dishonesty. SW executive Richard Tarling was less fortunate and ended up in Changi prison.

Now that was then – when financial disclosure was not what it is today and there were no laws against insider trading – and this is now. But it is still remarkable to suggest that Jim Slater is a fit and proper person to be the chairman of a listed company, even if it is only on the lightly regulated AIM, by the supposed higher standards of today. However, as Henry Ford said, history is bunk – especially when there is money to be made.

EVENTS at Yves St Laurent licensee Marchpole go from bad to worse for the unfortunate small shareholders victimised by the power play between former chairman and major shareholder Michael Morris and the spineless board. Not content with a proposed fourth boardroom reshuffle in two years, Morris has called a shareholders' meeting to impose his own nominees. The remaining directors are said to be considering jumping ship and leaving the company to its fate.

What they should be doing is calling in the Department of Timidity & Inactivity which since the internal chaos at Marchpole was highlighted here two issues ago is said to be monitoring the situation.

What the DTI should be doing is probing the allegations of fraud, secret profits and corporate abuse made against Morris by the present board and then dropped last year as part of a civil settlement for commercial reasons. It is rare for such serious allegations to be made against a director. Marchpole was claiming £570,000 from Morris. It is unclear whether Morris has yet paid what he agreed.

The DTI should also inquire into the relationship between Morris and his ally Harold Tillman; and whether Tillman has paid in full for the 10 percent stake bought from Morris. Another area for questioning could be the extent to which Morris may also be able to rely on the support of certain overseas shareholders.

Meanwhile with the Marchpole bankers demanding repayment from the proposed £4.7m sale of its headquarters, perhaps it is also time the Stock Exchange woke up to what is happening to the long suffering silent majority of shareholders who have seen the price collapse to pennies.

'Henry Slicker & Associates'

Number crunching

$2 billion

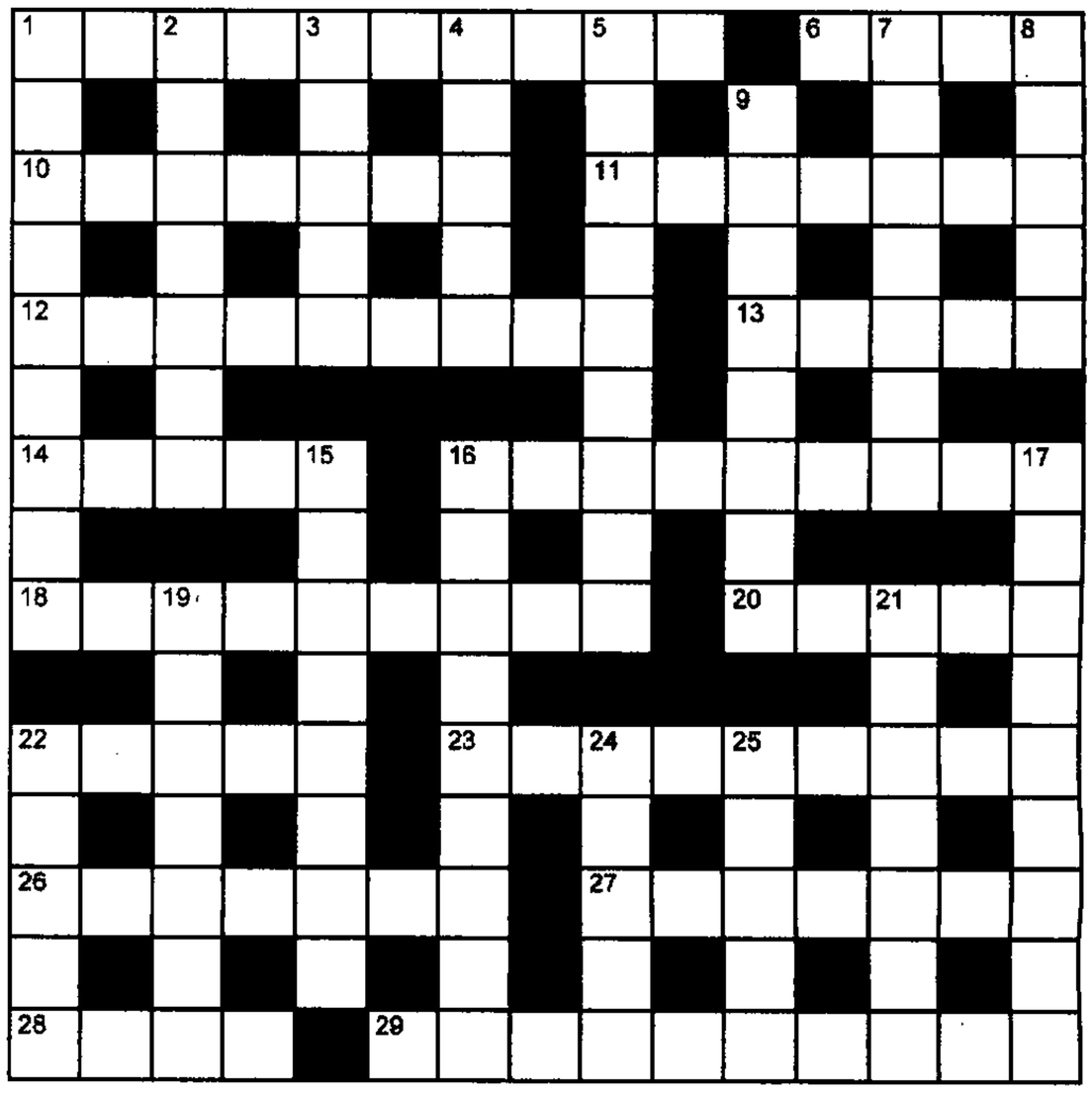
- Estimated sum needed in 2002 to sustain Palestinian economy.
- US military aid to Israel for 2002.

EYE CROSSWORD 208

by Cyclops

£100 prize to first correct solution opened on 10 May 2002.

Entries to 'Crossword', Private Eye, 6 Carlisle Street, London W1D 3BN or via email to crossword@private-eye.co.uk



ACROSS

1/10/11 Loving a bit on the side but he's without aspiration, drifting – hardly surprising (7,3,7,7)
6 Contra chops head off leader of child criminals (4)
10 See 1ac.
11 See 1ac.
12 To get a shag, pull one or more to each side (5,4)
13 It's grand being swamped with money like Brenda (5)
14 Flower stuck in behind, usually (5)
16 Darn sex involves container for sponging bum (9)
18 Like the new Bill and Ben, without provisions (2,7)
20 Catch 'large arse' having a ball (5)
22 Cry about Blair's last flattering description (5)
23 It's obtrusive, revealing underwear (5,4)
26 Writer gives dick tug reportedly (7)
27 Sex, for crying out loud! (7)
28 It's naturally important, what Clinton said he didn't have initially (outside of dollars) ... (4)
29 ... "Pot linked to Bill," the guy had complained (5-5)

DOWN

1 Familiar MP with track record, as bent as one could be (9)
2 Glandular section of shoulder-blade? No idea (7)
3 Accepted decline of familiar title (5)
4 Person held by old monarch gets stiff (5)
5 Eye cover and revelation swallowed by criminals and fools (9)
7 State Gore lost, having little interest in that state (7)
8 US body sending people up over length of organ (5)
9 Balls displayed on top, an excessive action? (8)
15 One who sets aside tart (8)
16 Hands-on love interlude, a life-changing experience (9)
17 Unlike Silver (whether man or beast) (3-6)
19 Relishes, according to the reporter, what reporters often claim to have (7)
21 Fashionable with chic exterior, as bastards are (7)
22 Victoria's facetiously named consort, Burns (5)
24 Not a clanger dropping Latin prize instigator (5)
25 Conference centre sexual partner rolled over with an appreciative response (5)

Crossword 207 winner: DAVID M. PATERSON

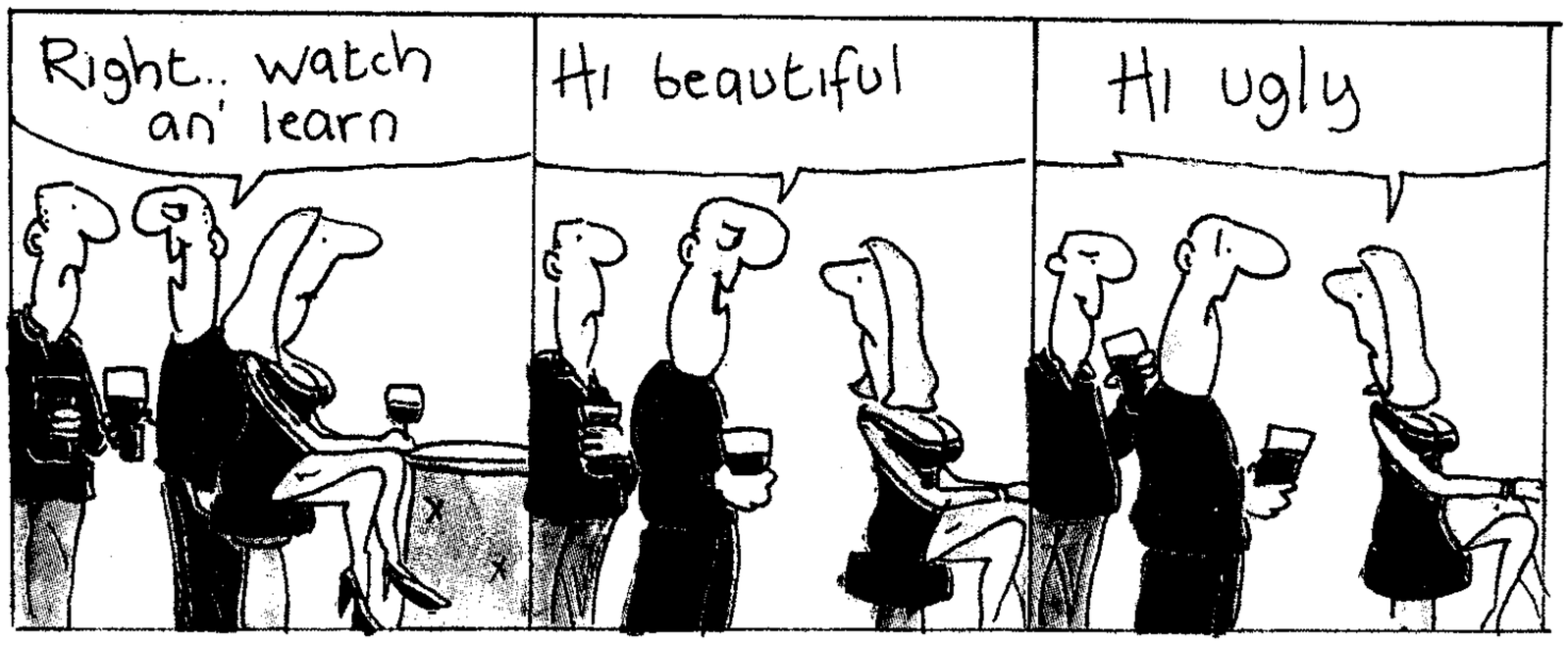
Solution to Crossword 207

ACROSS: 1 Mars bar 5 Heretic 9 Rival 10 Bird-brain 11 Economics 12 E. coli 13/19 Sticking up two fingers 15 Emma 17 Cuff 22 Euros 23 Fetishist 26 Charivari 27 Enemy 28 Wimpish 29 Fat-head.

DOWN: 1 Merde 2 Ravioli 3 Bollocks 4 Rabbi 5 Hard stuff 6 Rubber 7 Tea room 8 Cannibals 13 Sacred cow 14 Newsflash 16 In a sweat 18 Firearm 20 Evil eye 21 Assisi 24 Thief 25 Toyed.

YOBS

HUSBAND



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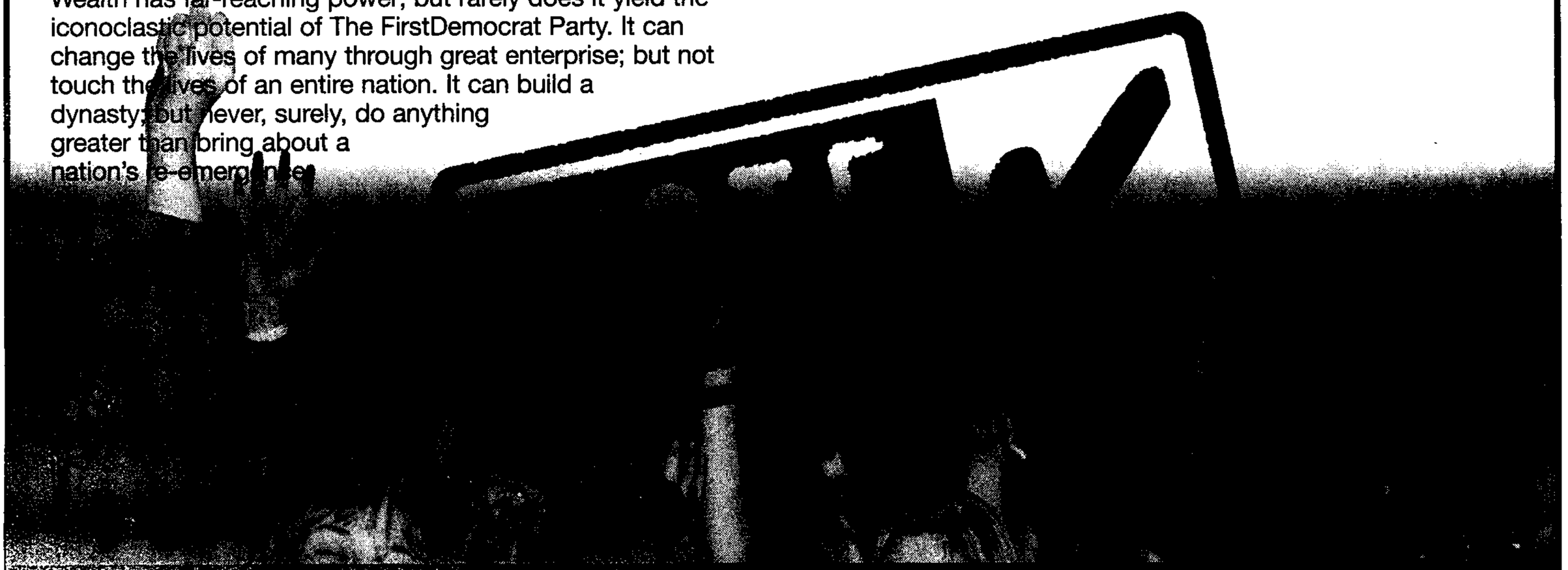

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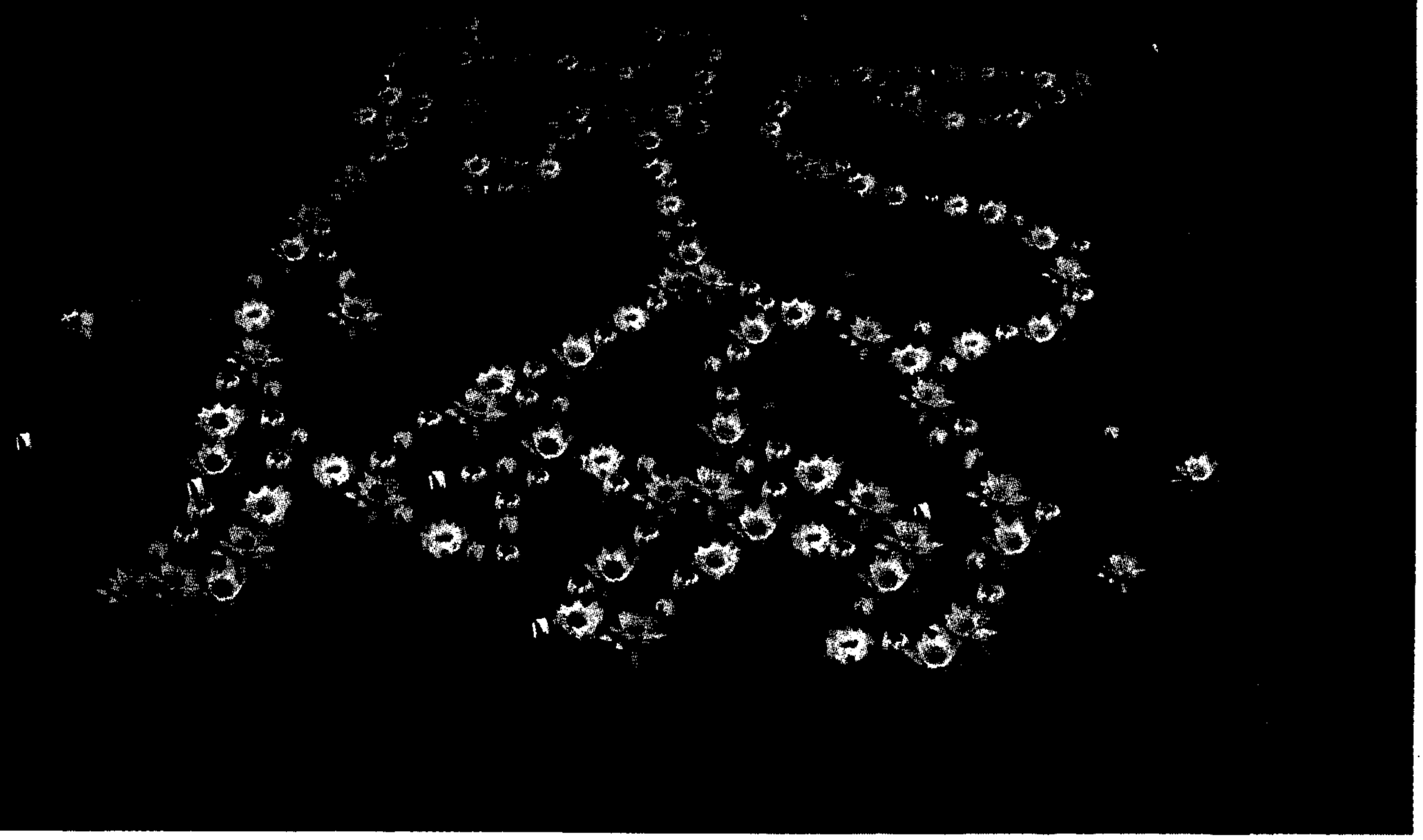

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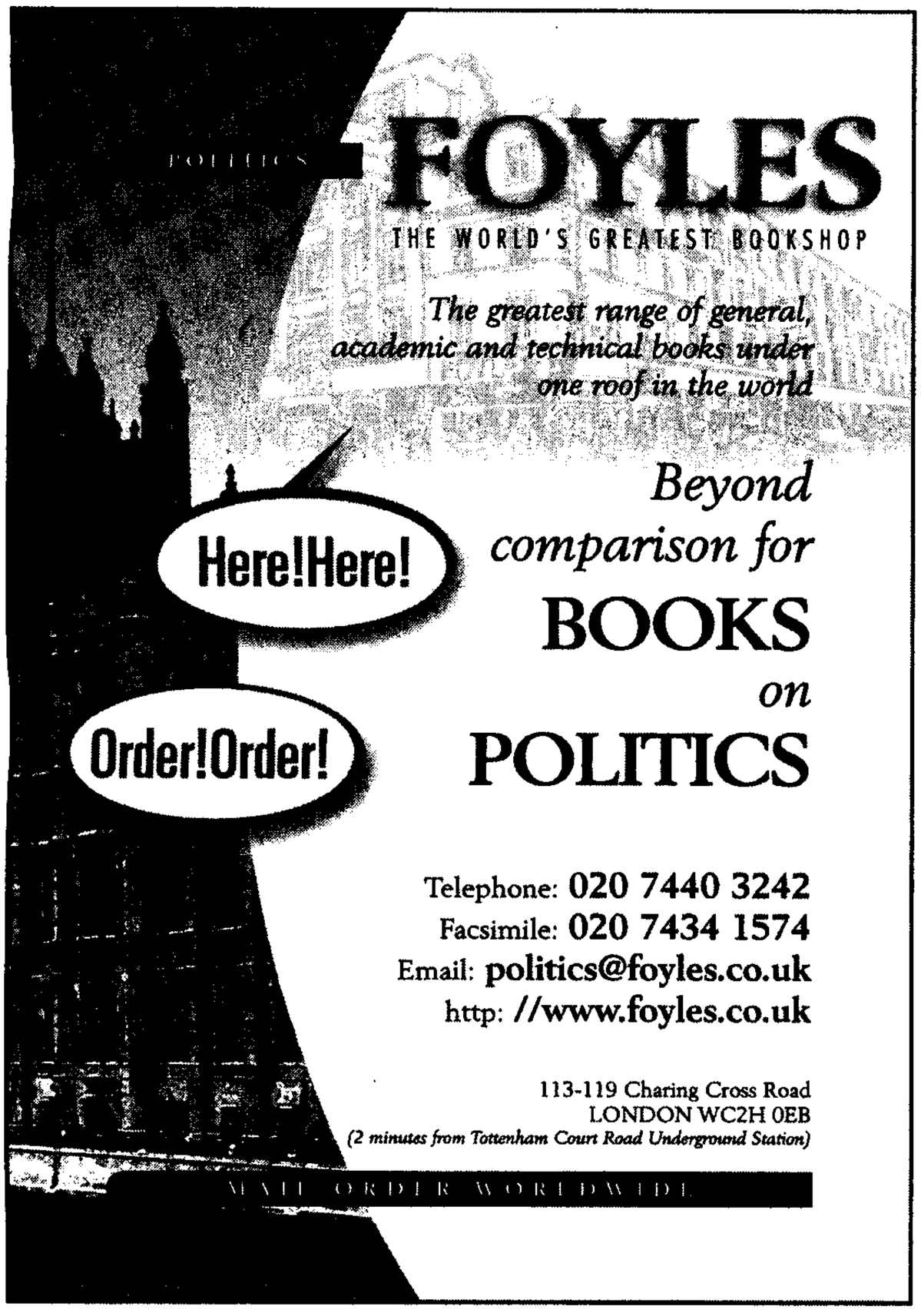

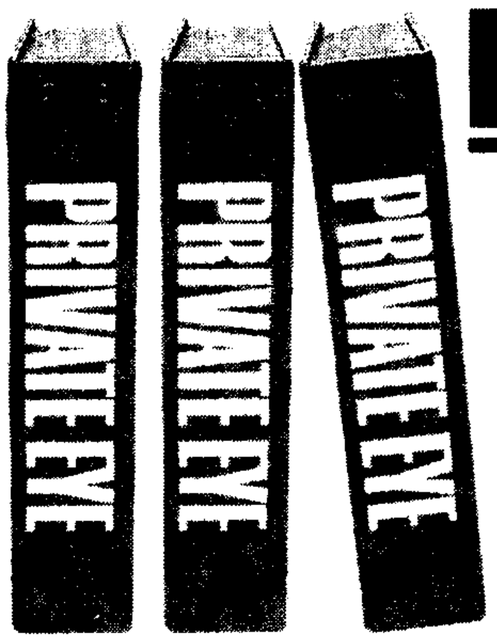

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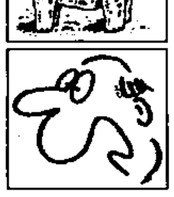

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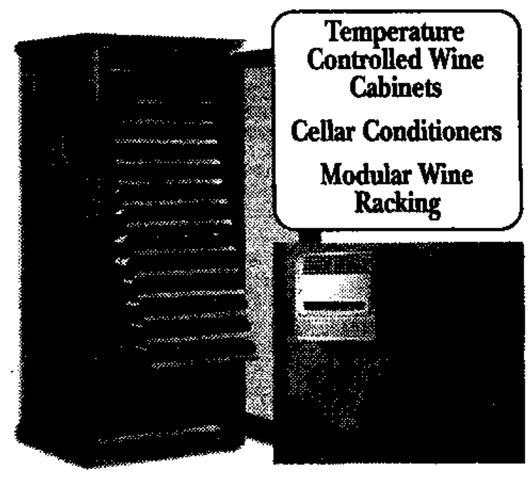

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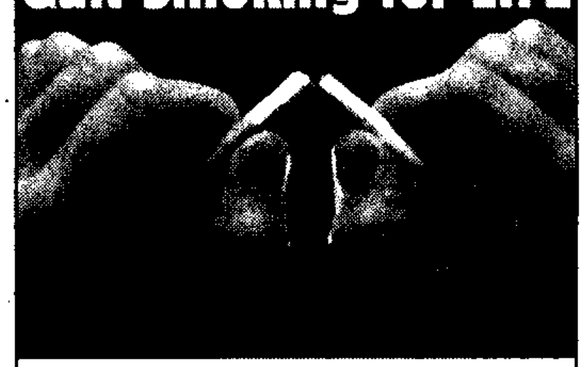

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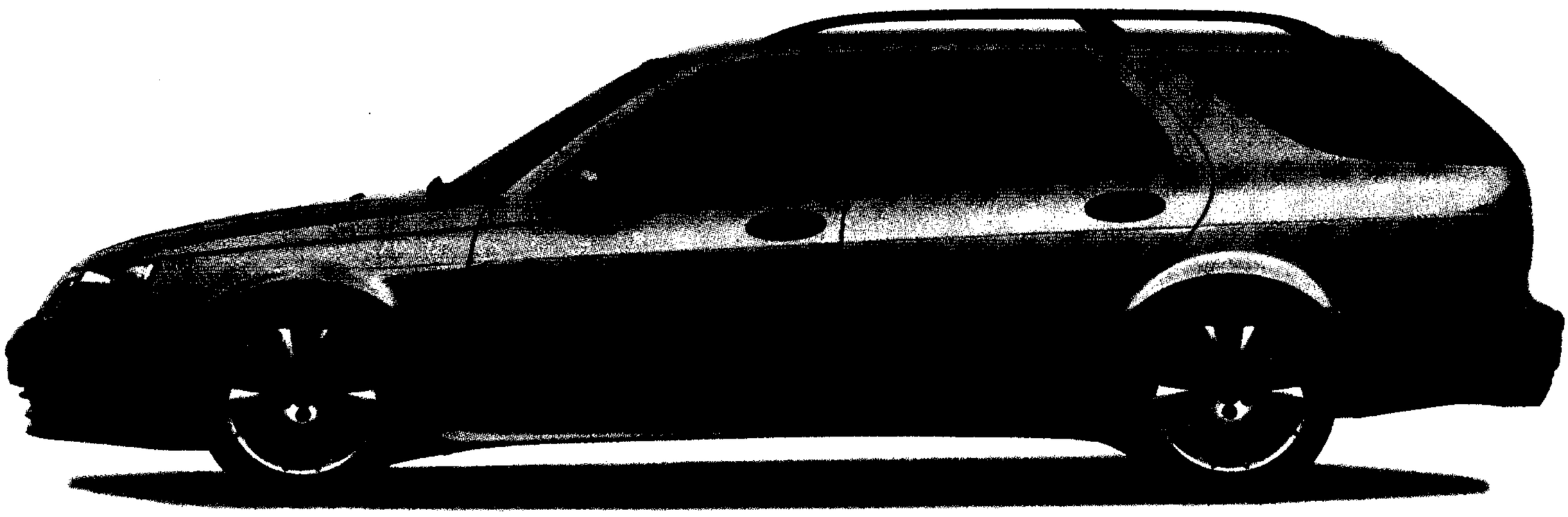

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